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| RESUMEN DEL CONTENIDO (Mínimo 80 máximo 120 palabras) | <p>El presente estudio explora la aplicación de tres estrategias de vocabulario: tarjetas de palabras, asociación con imágenes, y asociación con un tema a través de fábulas en la adquisición de vocabulario en un grupo de adolescentes con bajo nivel de competencia en inglés en un colegio público. Los participantes tenían dificultades para memorizar y recordar palabras. Los resultados mostraron que estas estrategias ayudan a incrementar el aprendizaje de las palabras y a mejorar la capacidad para recordarlas. El estudio encontró que estas estrategias involucran factores cognitivos y afectivos que pueden afectar la percepción de los estudiantes acerca de las estrategias. La aplicación de estas estrategias informa a la comunidad educativa la necesidad de implementarlas como parte del programa de inglés.</p> | | |

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The Acquisition of Vocabulary through Three Memory Strategies

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Universidad de La Sabana

Chía, 2012

THE ACQUISITION OF VOCABULARY THROUGH THREE MEMORY STRATEGIES

The Acquisition of Vocabulary through Three Memory Strategies

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in English

Language Teaching –Autonomous Learning Environments

Directed by: Elizabeth Hope Goodwin

Master in English Language Teaching –Autonomous Learning Environments

Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

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THE ACQUISITION OF VOCABULARY THROUGH THREE MEMORY STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The present study explores the implications of applying three vocabulary strategies: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic through fables in the acquisition of vocabulary in a group of teenagers with a low-level of English proficiency in a public school at Espinal, Tolima, Colombia. The participants had not used these vocabulary strategies before and struggled to memorize and recall words. The results showed that these strategies were effective to enable students to expand their range of words progressively and improve the ability to recall words. The study also found that these strategies involve cognitive and affective factors that can affect students' perceptions about the strategies. The implementation of these strategies informs the educational community about the need to train learners on the use of vocabulary strategies and to include them as part of the English language program.

Key words: vocabulary strategies, memorization, vocabulary acquisition.

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Resumen

El presente estudio explora las implicaciones de la aplicación de tres estrategias de vocabulario: tarjetas de palabra, asociación con imágenes, y asociación con un tema a través de fábulas en la adquisición de vocabulario en un grupo de adolescentes con bajo nivel de competencia en inglés como lengua extranjera, estudiantes de un colegio público en el Espinal, Tolima, Colombia. Los participantes no habían utilizado estrategias de vocabulario y tenían dificultades para memorizar y recordar palabras. Los resultados mostraron que estas estrategias ayudan de manera eficaz a los estudiantes a incrementar progresivamente el aprendizaje de las palabras, desarrollar y mejorar su capacidad de recordar palabras. El estudio también encontró que estas estrategias involucran factores cognitivos y afectivos que pueden afectar la percepción de los estudiantes acerca de las estrategias. La aplicación de estas estrategias de vocabulario informa a la comunidad educativa sobre la necesidad de capacitar a los estudiantes en su uso y de implementarlas como parte del programa de inglés.

Palabras clave: estrategias de vocabulario, memorización, adquisición de vocabulario

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Introduction

This research is intended to investigate the acquisition of vocabulary with a group of teenagers with a low-level of English proficiency (A- and A1) in a public school at El Espinal, which is a town in Tolima, Colombia, through three memory strategies: word cards, association with a picture, and association with a topic or story. This study is based on a pedagogical intervention in which three memory strategies were implemented as part of the school program of 11th graders who applied the strategies using nine fables to learn fifteen words from each one. Because the sample was limited to twelve students who signed consent letters allowing the researcher to collect data from their questionnaires and vocabulary tests designed for this implementation, the findings are limited to this sample and the conclusions of this research might not apply to other language learning contexts. The fables were chosen based on the students' interest for this kind of material, the fables' short length, the students' language level, the repetition of vocabulary. This is one of the materials suggested by the Ministry of Education of Colombia to be used with students with A1 level. The focus of this study was addressed to the use of these vocabulary strategies and the use of the fables was limited to the intentional vocabulary learning not to reading comprehension.

Schmitt (2008) indicated that “one thing that students, teachers, materials, writers, and researchers can all agree upon is that learning vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a second language” (p. 329). In the needs analysis, the data collected from the scores that SABER Exam reported in the SIE of the eleventh graders, the graders' comments in class, the English teachers' meeting of area and the researcher's personal observation indicated that the students struggled to memorize vocabulary, to recognize words they had learned in former years, and to recall words. Both English teachers and eleven graders expressed the need to expand the range

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of words to increase the ability to convey meaning and the low scores registered on the SABER¹ exam indicated the students were unable to achieve a B1 language performance after six years of academic English learning. As Wilkins (1972) highlighted, “while without grammar little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 111). Hence, the implementation of the three vocabulary strategies of this study could provide teachers with elements that they could use to train their learners in vocabulary development. Likewise, students would be aware of how they could train their long term memory to extend their range of vocabulary. This could help the researcher find responses to her community’s needs in the teaching and learning process as a first step to improve the current situation of these students and their English performance.

The present study is organized in six chapters. The first chapter, which is the introduction of this study, presents the statement of the problem, the research question and objectives, and the rationale to carry out this project. The second chapter discusses the theoretical framework, which considers key concepts related to the constructs through point of view of the theory and state of art of other similar national and international projects related to vocabulary learning and memory strategies. The third chapter presents the research design, which includes the type of study that was carried out, the researcher’s role, the context, the participants, and the data collection instruments and procedures, and the action plan used to carry out this research. Afterwards, the fourth chapter, which is the pedagogical intervention and implementation of this study, provides a description of the steps and processes to follow to solve the research problem, including a timeline, a description of the materials, methodology, and how the lessons were carried out. Next, the fifth chapter explains in detail how the data analysis was conducted: categories, subcategories, sample data, interpretation of it, comparison with theory and other

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research projects. Finally, the sixth chapter draws conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations, and some considerations for further research.

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Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

At the time the researcher initiated this research project and diagnosed the problem, the participants of this study were in tenth grade, but when the study was implemented, the learners were in eleventh grade, but just twelve of them signed the consent for data usage. These eleventh grade students, whose average age was 16, began studying English in sixth grade with two one-hour lessons per week. Their instruction had always been delivered in Spanish using a grammar-based approach. The students were required to learn rules and vocabulary that after years of study the students were unable to use. Mock exams had been implemented in the 10th and 11th grades as part of the institutional strategies to grade learners' performance in English and to ensure students obtained better outcomes on the governmental SABER exam. However, school documents of these mock test results repeatedly showed that students had a low level English performance according to the Common European Framework.

According to the National Standards of Colombia for English and the Common European Framework, these students should be in a B1 level and, they should have a vocabulary that allows them to “produce simple connected text on topics, which are familiar, or of personal interest. [They should also be able to] describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans” (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 2001, p. 24). Nevertheless, these students are currently ranked in A- and A1 level. At A1 level the students should be able to “understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. [They should be able] to introduce [themselves] and others and ... ask and answer questions about personal details ... [They should] interact in a simple way provided the other

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person talks slowly and clearly” (*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, 2001, p. 24). At A1 level the students use “their mother tongue to demonstrate reading or speaking comprehension” (*Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés*, 2006, p. 18). The placement of more than 50% of students at A- level indicates that they were not able to convey meaning and use English to complete the task required on the SABER exam (see Table 1).

An analysis of the SABER exam published by SNIEE from 2009 to 2011 showed that more than 50% of 11th graders had not even achieved level A which is the level designed for primary students (third grade), and only 42% to 32 % had reached A1. Hence, in order to label this level of performance, the SABER exam has created a new level: A-.

Table 1

SABER Results of 11th Graders’ Language Level of the Public in which this Study Took Place in Espinal. Adapted from SNIEE for 2009, 2010 and 2011.

| Percentage of students in each language level using the CEF scale | | | |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Level | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 |
| A- | 57,50 | 51,92 | 65,67 |
| A1 | 42,50 | 42,30 | 32,78 |
| A2 | - | 1,92 | - |
| B1 | - | 3,84 | 1,63 |

The twelve participants of this study took a mock SABER exam applied by the school as a way to prepare 10th and 11th graders for the standardized SABER exam. The scores on the mock exam showed that ten of the students were at A- level and two of them were at A1 level. These results, compared with general performance of the 11th grade illustrated in Table 1, indicated these learners had a low-language level.

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The Ministry of Education of Colombia has created an equivalent version of the English level of Common European Framework. It also has indicated a group of grades at which each language level should be achieved and the English standards required by grades that learners must achieve at that level. As indicated in Table 2, A1 (beginner) is the lowest level designated. In this study, the term “low-level” refers a level of English proficiency at A1 or A-.

Table 2

Equivalent Version of the English Levels of the Common European Framework in Colombia. (Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés, 2006, p. 10).

| Group of grades | CEF levels | Colombian Ministry of Education nomenclature | |
|------------------------|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| Tenth to Eleventh | B1 | B 1.2 | Pre-intermediate 2 |
| Eight to ninth | | B 1.1 | Pre-intermediate 1 |
| Sixth to seventh | A2 | A 2.2 | Basic 2 |
| Fourth to fifth | | A 2.1 | Basic 1 |
| First to third | A1 | A1 | Beginner |

The institution is supposed to follow the National Ministry of Education guidelines for English learning in the National Plan of Bilingualism. This program is designed to foster learning English as a foreign language among Colombian citizens. Hence, this public high school had adopted the English standards set by the Colombian government in its PEI. The English syllabus design should reflect the English standards of the Colombian government, but in practice, at this institution, the language skills were not an important part of the syllabus because it focused only on grammatical aspects of the language and Spanish was the instructional language to the English classes. These classes were organized in two one-hour English lessons per week. Sixty percent of the eleventh graders expressed in class discussion

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that they took their English class because it was a compulsory subject in the curriculum; therefore, not all of them were openly willing to learn English.

The fact that students had been labeled A- and A1, as shown in Table 1, indicated that students still needed to extend their range of vocabulary and “develop strategies that help [them] understand some words, expressions and sentences that [they] read [so they can] identify common contextualized words about a topic familiar for them [or] to apply diagrams to organize information about short tales [they should have] read in class” as stated in the English standards and the receptive skills (*Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés*, 2006, p. 18). Even though the SABER exam might not include fables, *Estándares Básicos de Competencias* (2006) indicates the use of “short narrative texts [which include] tales” (p. 18) as one the main materials English teachers should use with A1 level students to increase vocabulary. Because the students of this study chose fables and the standards set by the Ministry of Education recommended them in a class at a Beginner level, the researcher implemented this material in the research project.

When the students were asked in class about the main difficulty they faced while taking this SABER exam, the students reported struggling to identify the meaning of the words and to convey meaning since the tests had a great number of unknown words that made it difficult for them to be sure of their answers. This illustrates that from the students’ viewpoint they experienced frustration trying to understand items in the exam and not being able to respond correctly because of the lack of vocabulary. The students of this public school are confronted with this problem when they take the mock SABER exam and the standardized SABER exam.

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When the researcher asked the English teachers in the departmental meeting about the students' main difficulties in the SABER exam and the main reasons for these difficulties, the minutes show that teachers reported that the students struggled to understand the instructions and the texts because of their lack of vocabulary. When the teachers were asked about the reason for this deficiency in vocabulary, two expressed that they taught vocabulary in class, but the students were responsible for learning it and three reported that they used wordlists, dictionaries and pictures to help the students but English was not a real daily need for the learners so they forgot the words. When they were asked about an action plan to address this problem, the teachers said that they had only implemented the mock SABER exams in 10th and 11th grades. This indicates that although teachers agreed with the students about the need to increase vocabulary, they were unsure about the best way to help their students overcome this problem. Therefore, this study was developed with these eleventh graders to try to find a solution to this problem and establish tools that could help English teachers get acquainted with the use of memory strategies. In this way, they could use the result of this study to help their students be aware of memory strategies to improve vocabulary learning.

When the thirty eleventh graders were asked in a class discussion prior to the implementation of this study if they knew how to learn vocabulary and if they had been instructed in how to learn it, twelve students indicated that they made wordlists, eight reported that they used a dictionary and ten used both wordlists and a dictionary. Even though they used these kinds of strategies, these twenty eight students reported they did not know how to learn vocabulary so that they could remember the words. When they were asked if they would like to know how to learn vocabulary, they answered "yes." During a preliminary needs analysis activity in class, the researcher observed that these students struggled to identify, recall, and use

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words that they were supposed to have known since the sixth grade, such as vocabulary related to family, places, and daily routines or free time activities. The class was divided in groups for a warm-up activity and each group was asked to write thirty words about their daily routines and free time activities in the context of school activities on the board in ten minutes. The first student of each group had to write a word and the second had to write another by using the final letter of the word written previously. The students started to skip their turn, asking their partners what word they should write, checking their notes of the previous class on their notebooks and asking the teacher to let them use the dictionary. This warm-up activity was aimed at recycling vocabulary from previous lessons and activating learners' previous vocabulary knowledge so the teacher could use these words to introduce a topic about people's lifestyles and how they used their free time later in the lesson. The researcher observed that the students were unable to remember thirty words from vocabulary learned in previous lessons and years. This indicated that the students struggled to recall vocabulary from their long term memory and retrieve it when they needed it and that the dictionary had become their primary resource to recall words.

What it is more, during the development of another lesson in which the learners had to use "*be going to*" to answer yes/no questions about their personal plans in the context of their vacation plan, the learners struggled to brainstorm places to visit, activities to do there, things to carry out, means of transportation, and family members during the beginning of the lesson in the warm up activity. During ten minutes, in groups of five students, they had to write five words for each aspect based on the title "a family's plan for their vacation" written on the board; however; most of the groups were only able to write eight words. Some of the learners started asking if they had to write them in English, others asked the teacher-researcher about the meaning and the spelling of the words, and most of them started using the dictionary again.

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Most of the students failed to recall vocabulary about family. They were only able to remember the words *father*, *mother*, and brother, but they were unsure about the spelling of them. Some of them wrote *fader* and *moder* instead of father and mother. Then at the final stage of the lesson when they had to use this vocabulary to plan their vacations, they started again to use the dictionary to check the meaning of the words. When they were asked about the reason they were unable to recall, they answered that they did not remember the words well because they had learnt them some years ago when they had to take an English test in the class. This showed again that the students used to rely on the dictionary as the main strategy to identify the meaning of the words, but they failed to remember them and looked them up on the dictionary over and over again. This also highlighted that these 11th graders struggled to recall the words they had learnt because they had only used their short term memory to learn vocabulary to answer tests and had not really developed vocabulary strategies that enable them to store words in their long-term memory. The use of vocabulary strategies could provide students the tools they need to “store information in their LTM and retrieve it easily whenever it is necessary for speaking, reading, writing or listening to the foreign language” (Arias, 2003, p. 117). The lack of vocabulary can affect the students’ language performance; therefore, there is an imperative need to search for possible solutions that could help low-level learners to increase their vocabulary learning.

Research Question

What might the implementation of memory strategies inform us about the acquisition of vocabulary through fables in a group of teenagers with a low-level of English proficiency in a public school at El Espinal?

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Objectives

- To evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of three memory strategies to acquire vocabulary through fables.
- To compare the memory strategies in order to determine which one is more effective on vocabulary retention.

Rationale

Through this study, the teacher-researcher wants to contribute to the field of English teaching and learning by looking for a possible solution to a specific learning problem and inform educators about the importance of making decisions based on “theory, applied research, and teachers’ ideas to contribute to practice and enrich each other” (Krashen ,1984, p. 34). In this way, the students would benefit from research findings. As an English teacher at a public school, the researcher hopes to persuade her colleagues to start teaching the low-proficiency strategies to acquire and recall vocabulary so the learners become users of those strategies to increase their vocabulary storage and to retrieve vocabulary when they need it.

This study could also give English teachers tools to start considering strategies to make it possible for them to adjust the Institutional Education Project (PEI²) of the school so the English syllabus addresses the students’ need for increasing their count of words to fit not only the National Standards for English in Colombia but primarily to be functional in this language. Thornbury (2004) claims that “most of the researchers nowadays recommended a basic vocabulary of at least 3,000 word families, while for more specialized needs, a working vocabulary of over, 5,000 word families is probably desirable” (p. 21) to be able to understand at

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least 90% of a text. In order to reduce the number of unknown words in a text and give the students the tools to improve their reading comprehension, there is a strong need to equip learners with at least a core vocabulary of the 2000 most frequently used words (Thornbury, 2004). Although the CEF has not specified the word families required for each level, the CEF states that at an A1 level the students should have “a basic vocabulary repertory of isolated words and phrases related to particular concrete situations” (Common European Framework of Reference for Language, 2001, p. 112). Under this circumstance there is an imperative need to empower learners with strategies that increase their number of words and ensure that the words that will be selected for learning really will be learnt.

Bearing in mind the low level results on SABER tests and that the classes used to be grammar based without a high effect on students’ language performance, this research could change the way teachers teach English vocabulary in this public school because it is focused on looking for a solution to help students extend their range of words instead of teaching them as a word list. Many teachers neglect to use methods to teach vocabulary because as Arias (2003) stated, “it has to be given a special treatment in the language classroom, it demands constant use of memory for learners and they could not know how to help learners to deal with it” (p. 115). Thus, the researcher could persuade English teachers to start working on methods that train learners’ memory towards the acquisition of vocabulary and the development of their language skills.

Folse (2004) indicated that when “vocabulary is not systematically covered in most curricula ... ESL learners-even after completing an English course successfully-say in exit surveys that they need much more vocabulary practice and instruction” (p. 10). Thus, the results

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of this study could also give EFL teachers the opportunity to realize the effectiveness of memory strategies in the acquisition of vocabulary and could give English tools to guide the EFL students towards the development of a second lexicon that could help them to start improving their basic communicative skills. In this way, the researcher believes students would feel that their language needs are being taken into account.

Schmitt (2008) pointed out that “the best means of achieving good vocabulary learning is still unclear, partly because it depends on a wide variety of factors” (p. 329). Thus, continued research is needed to discover those strategies that best help learners to increase their vocabulary. Hence, this study seeks to inform researchers and English teachers about the effectiveness of word cards, association with a picture, and association with a topic on vocabulary learning in A- and A1 proficiency EFL learners.

Finally, this research could also impact the way the English classes have been taught and the way learners see them so they could find a real reason to learn vocabulary and start increasing their range of words. The fact that they could use a strategy to acquire vocabulary and convey meaning could be more motivating for learners than memorizing a list of words out of context (Nakata, 2008). This could help teachers and learners to know how to train their long term memory instead of only using their short-term memory, making vocabulary learning more fruitful and useful for learners.

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Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Since learning vocabulary is an important component in mastering a second language (Schmitt, 2008), vocabulary acquisition is key to being functional in an EFL context. This research project states that after five years of formal English study, these A- and A1 teenagers of 11th grade in a public high school struggled to store and recall vocabulary possibly due to the lack of knowledge about how to use some vocabulary strategies. The project proposes to overcome this problem by applying three vocabulary strategies, which are word cards, word association with pictures, and word association with a topic. In fact, these students need to be trained in vocabulary learning strategies that could facilitate and contribute to their EFL learning process.

This study is supported with a review of the literature and research studies conducted in the same or similar area for vocabulary acquisition. The **constructs** are (a) the acquisition of vocabulary and long term memory and (b) vocabulary strategies.

The Acquisition of Vocabulary and Long Term Memory

One aspect of the acquisition of vocabulary teachers, students, and researchers agree on is the fact that learning and increasing vocabulary is an indispensable part of mastering a foreign language (Schmitt, 2008). Regarding this, Wilkins (1972) highlighted “that while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 111). He clearly stated the importance of vocabulary learning and that lexical development never stops in our first language nor should it stop in the foreign language.

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Although language is made of texts that need to be understood to communicate and convey meaning (Kucer, 2009) and words are the smallest component of a language, the lack of vocabulary can make decoding any text, whether written or spoken, difficult even with some basic grammar knowledge. Folse (2008) illustrated this through a personal experience when he was unable to make a simple purchase because he had no idea how to say *flour* in Japanese. He put himself in the language students' situation, noting "how frustrating it is when you want to say something and are stymied because you don't know the word for a simple noun!" (Folse, 2008, p. 23). Folse's conclusion was that "without vocabulary no communication is possible" (Folse, 2008, p. 25) which is aligned with Wilkins (1972) who stated "without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p.111). This is especially true for A- and A1 EFL whose insufficient English vocabulary knowledge could discourage them from reading a text or prevent them from communicating and conveying meaning. Students will always need to develop the capability of extending their stored level of words because the more words they acquire, the better their ability to communicate, convey meaning, and develop their language skills. However, acquiring vocabulary is more than memorizing a list of isolated words. Vocabulary learning means that learners are able to remember and recall words when they meet and re-meet these words in different contexts and that learners use these words when they are cues to also deal with unknown vocabulary (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1998; Nation, 2008). Thus, passive acquisition requires that learners build up a store of words for later recognition.

Thornbury, (2004) stated that "acquiring vocabulary requires not only labeling but categorizing skills" (p. 18), which involves creating a second lexicon in an EFL context. This means that students should be able to organize, interconnect, and link previous word knowledge in order to process new information. He explained this idea using the following metaphor:

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“Learning a second language is like moving to a new town – it takes time to establish connections and turn acquaintances into friends. And what is the difference between an acquaintance and a friend? Well, we may forget an acquaintance, but we can never forget a friend” (Thornbury, 2004, p. 20). In other words, words are the friends that learners should never forget, a relationship that should be cultivated through the years and a need that should be supplied in terms of developing a consciously LTM use. This highlights the importance of presenting vocabulary in context and providing students the time they need to identify the meaning of the words and make meaningful connections so that the words can be remembered.

In fact, Arias (2003) stated, “LTM is the type of memory that language students must improve if they want to be good users of the foreign language” (p. 116). This means students need to learn to process the information so it can be stored in LTM. Zimbardo (1992) indicated that episodic memory, used to store facts and experiences, and semantic memory, used to store data such as vocabulary, are two distinct types of LTM. Thus, students need to train their LTM to store vocabulary meaningfully and make useful and practical connections of the words with the material, the context, and the situation or topic they are working on. Materials such as fables chosen by the learners and suggested by Ministry of Colombian Education to be used with students at A1 level (*Estándares Básicos de Competencias en Lenguas Extranjeras: Inglés*, 2006, 18) could be used to bring the participants of this study the opportunity to use the content of the fables and the situations presented in them to make meaningful connection between the words and the material, their previous knowledge and the meaning of the words.

However, this does not mean that the information stored in LTM is never forgotten. This is why research into memory suggests some principles, including repetition, retrieval, spacing,

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pacing, use, cognitive depth, organization, imagining, and mnemonics to ensure that the information moves into permanent LTM (Sprenger, 1999; Thornbury, 2004). These principles are reflected in memory strategies such as arranging in order, making association, and reviewing (Oxford, 1990), so following them, it is expected that students learn vocabulary in a meaningful way and retrieve it appropriately.

Repeating exposure is key to learning vocabulary; this should be understood as meet and re-meet a word in different situations so it can be learnt and retrieved (Nation, 2001). In this regards, Schmitt (2008) stated that “[w]ords will have to be met in many different contexts in order to develop mastery of the different word knowledge types, and this entails a long-term recursive approach to vocabulary learning” (p. 335). This indicates that when thinking about acquisition and pedagogy, there are some aspects of vocabulary that should be intentionally learnt such as word meaning and word form. This requires a more explicit teaching component in which repeated exposures to the word can benefit its learning. Indeed, research states that a single episode of vocabulary instruction might not be enough for vocabulary learning, but intentional vocabulary learning and repeated encounters with the word can bring a better chance of retention. Webb (2007) reported when comparing the learning of words from the study of L2-L1 word pairs, that a single exposure to the words had little effect on retention. Nation (1990) suggested that from 5 to 16 exposures are needed. Rott (1999) found that six exposures benefit vocabulary learning and Thornbury (2004) stated that it takes six or more encounters with a word. Waring and Takaki (2003) claimed that at least eight encounters were required to recognize a word in a vocabulary test. Pigada and Schmitt (2006) indicated that more than 10 exposures benefit vocabulary learning. Although researchers disagree on the number of exposures needed for the mastery of a new word, it is clear that repetition and recycling is an

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important factor to address the forgetting process. Thus, to make words memorable, teachers should give learners the chance to meet and re-meet words to enhance their learning. The use of short fables, that could share the same lexical items, could give these low-level students the opportunity to meet and re-meet words they might have been learning during the lessons and to increase the opportunity the words could be learned.

Schmitt (2008) claimed based on memory research that “most forgetting occurs soon after the learning session and then eventually slows down..., so the first recycling [is] particularly important and need[s] to occur quickly” (p. 343). In this regards, Gu (2003) reported some results related to this forgetting process such as the study done by Anderson and Jordan (1928), who examined the number of words that could be recalled immediately after initial learning one week, three weeks, and eight weeks thereafter and discovered a learning rate of 66%, 48%, 39%, and 37% respectively. A similar result can be found in Cheng and Good (2009), who observed that research participants obtained high scores on the immediate vocabulary recall test after their first encounter with the text, then the scores decreased on the first delayed vocabulary recall test and afterwards these increased on the second delayed vocabulary test. This shows that a process of forgetting starts after having learned a word, but this process could be reduced if the students were exposed to repeated review of the words whether it was for meeting and re-meeting them or recycling them. Since forgetting is part of a vocabulary learning process, the findings highlight the need of giving learners instructions about how to learn and store vocabulary for long life use. This could be useful for A- and A1 learners who expressed difficulty in remembering words from earlier grades because of the lengths of time between their learning and their use. So the implementation of the vocabulary strategies could give the participants of the study the resources to reduce the forgetting process.

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Vocabulary Strategies

Although current training books, methods, and techniques have focused their efforts on the four language skills, this does not mean that teachers know how to face the challenge of helping their students to acquire vocabulary. Some teachers might believe that vocabulary learning is an easy issue, but the fact is that EFL students struggle to recall large quantities of words. Other teachers may be aware of the power of memory strategies, and may even try to instruct their students in how to use them; however, research has found that learners rarely use such strategies (Oxford, 1990). The challenge for English teachers is to help learners be familiar with memory strategies as ways to make vocabulary easy to remember so they are able to extend the limited storage of words.

Vocabulary can be learnt through incidental vocabulary learning from reading or direct intentional learning of vocabulary. According to Nation (2001), intensive reading could improve incidental vocabulary learning when, for example, students read for pleasure. Nevertheless, this kind of vocabulary learning is more likely to occur when students have a high proficiency level. Folse (2007) stated, “the use of context clues, an integral part of reading proficiency in L1 and L2, is problematic for learning new vocabulary” (p. 77), so strategies such as this can be more for students with a very limited number of words or who struggle to remember words learned such as the participants of this study. Low level students such as the participants of this study could profit more from a direct intentional vocabulary approach (Neilson, 2006; Scarcella & Oxford, 1994) while using fables because it is effective when the goal is to learn vocabulary. Schmitt (2008) stated that the focus on direct vocabulary learning “always leads to greater and faster gains, with a better change of retention and of reaching productive level of mastery”

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(Schmitt, 2008, p. 341) than incidental vocabulary learning from reading. Hence, vocabulary strategies addressed to learn vocabulary could better address the language needs of the students of this study. Rivers (1983) claimed “vocabulary cannot be taught. It can be presented, explained, included in all kinds of activities in all manner of associations...but ultimately it is learned by...a personal selection of items, organized into relationships in an individual way” (p. 123). Rivers' statement informed a number of decisions in this research project, yet for these low-level learners, who are less self-directed, some guidance in vocabulary learning techniques for training their long-term memory and some instruction on vocabulary strategies would benefit their English learning, but more importantly would foster their independent learning.

Thornbury (2004) indicated that studies have shown that good learners do the following:

- They pay attention to the form –which, in vocabulary terms, means paying attention to the constituents of the words, to their spelling, to their pronunciation and to the way they are stressed.
- They pay attention to meaning.
- They are good guessers.
- They take risks and are not afraid of making mistakes.
- They know how to organize their own learning –by, for example, keeping a systematic record of new words, using dictionaries, and other study aids resourcefully, using mnemonic techniques, and putting time aside for the “spade work” in language learning, such as repetitive practice. (p. 145)

Hence, training in vocabulary strategies cannot only help students improve the process of remembering words by making decisions about which strategy or strategies can be more

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successful to enhance vocabulary learning but also can direct them to achieve a measurable level of autonomy that can help them be more self-directed learners by developing their own vocabulary learning strategies. Ghazal (2009) remarked:

Vocabulary learning is one of the major challenges foreign language learners face during the process of learning a language. One way to allay the burden is to assist students in becoming independent learners during the process of L2 vocabulary learning. This could be achieved by instructing learners to apply vocabulary learning strategies as efficiently as possible. (p. 84)

For example, in his study, Sanaoui (1995) indicated the relationship between vocabulary strategies and success in acquiring and retaining vocabulary items and concluded that those students who had a more structured approach to learning vocabulary were more successful in retaining vocabulary taught in their classroom than those learners who had an unstructured approach. Therefore, the close relationship between strategy use and success in language learning cannot be overlooked. Students need to learn vocabulary, retain the word learnt, and use it when they require conveying meaning.

In general terms, researchers have been interested in determining if and to what extent memory strategies are effective for vocabulary retention. This is why comparative studies have been developed to identify and measure the superiority of one strategy in respect to another and different procedures have been implemented. Erten and William (2008) developed a comparative study to look into how to measure the effectiveness of vocabulary learning strategies in real learning tasks by using two statistical procedures. They claimed that these types of studies “can generate more useful results in order to better explore the effectiveness of

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different strategies. Therefore, further studies incorporating such tasks are needed to further our understanding of vocabulary learning strategies” (Erten & William, 2008, p. 69). Another comparative study was carried out by Homzie, Noyes and Lovelace (1973) in which they compared children’s abilities to memorize vocabulary by using pictures versus word responses in paired items through recall and recognition tests. The research reported that the learners had different outcomes depending upon the kind of test. Hence, in a four-alternative cognition task, there was no difference among picture and word responses, but with a modified recognition test picture responses were recalled better. Although students struggled to decode images or verbal representation of word, the nature of the strategy itself was a critical factor. These research findings are useful because this research studies word cards and picture strategies and their effect on vocabulary retention in an EFL context.

One 2009 research study investigated the most frequently used and most useful vocabulary language learning strategies among Chinese EFL postsecondary (age 17) students in Hong Kong. The research studied the learners’ perception of the frequency and usefulness of vocabulary learning strategies. The research findings indicated that learners found strategies significantly useful for learning vocabulary and that the more learners used a strategy, the more useful they considered the strategy to be. The study concluded that learners preferred cognitive strategies, where they repeat the spelling of the word in their minds, analyze the word by breaking it into sound segments, remember words by doing a project and ask classmates for the meaning of a word. Additionally, this study revealed the fact that vocabulary strategies had a positive effect on vocabulary acquisition and their selection was related to the students’ learning context. This research is particularly useful in the sense that it highlights the fact that from the

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learners' perception there is not only a need to be trained in different vocabulary strategies but also, after using them, they can clearly indicate their preferences (Hong, 2009).

Vocabulary strategies are useful tools that students can implement to work with unknown words. Kusumarasyati (n.d.) studied the strategies learners applied to work with unfamiliar words in readings in order to find out the patterns of the strategies used by learners. He stated that learners utilized basically four vocabulary strategies: context cues, monolingual dictionary, bilingual dictionary, and skipping. The researcher concluded that learners expect instructions that could help them work with unknown words. Additionally, the study indicated that learners need to be encouraged to practice different types of vocabulary strategies so they can discover which are most suitable for them. Thus, this study also emphasizes that learners need an opportunity to try vocabulary strategies to explore the way they can use or also adapt them to their learning preferences, something that will not be possible unless the students are trained in them and know their benefits.

Here in Colombia, Pineda (2010) explored the language learning strategies applied by the students of different languages at a university level language program and claimed that the evidence showed an inefficient use of strategies by the learners. He concluded that training in the identification and practice of language learning strategies could change that situation and produce positive language learning results enabling learners to become more independent and effective language learners. He also indicated that it was important that teachers be prepared to share and expose their learners to the strategies that better fit their students' needs. These findings are fully aligned with what Cárdenas (2001) stated is one of the main challenges for teachers in the Colombian setting: effective vocabulary teaching. She pointed out that teachers

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usually do not know how to explain to the students how they can learn more vocabulary. She argued that this situation is because the teachers focus their attention on the four language skills or emphasize grammar and the students are not taught enough words in class even though those aspects involve words. She concluded that teachers should devise their own vocabulary questions, activities and techniques so these could respond better to their students' characteristics (Cardenas, 2001). Ovalle (2001) developed a study to inform teachers how to help learners increase vocabulary and learn language in context and found that real and unreal contexts created in the class can make it easier for students to acquire vocabulary. She also recommended a constantly reviewing of the known words in groups to reduce the forgetting process of the words by the learners when these are not practiced enough (Ovalle, 2011). However, more studies on vocabulary strategies need to be implemented in an EFL context such as Colombia so that the teacher-researchers can help the students to acquire vocabulary in this setting.

Researcher Discussion on Vocabulary Strategies. In order to make vocabulary learning meaningful and significant for learners, research on vocabulary has been developed. Nemati (2009) studied the impacts of teaching vocabulary through memory strategies in terms of short and long memory retention between an experimental group and a control group. The results indicated that the experimental group had a better performance with memory strategies in short-term and long-term retention and recommended that “as many learners do not develop sufficient mastery of the vocabulary, explicit instruction of memory strategies and giving strategy awareness can facilitate them to store and retrieve new vocabulary items” (Nemati, 2009, p. 1). Thus, these memory strategies, also called mnemonics, are important to this study since these are powerful mental tools that can enable students to learn vocabulary. Learners

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would not be able to retrieve words unless they were appropriately stored in their memory, and vocabulary strategies could help learners cope with this problem.

The study highlights the strong relationship between vocabulary strategies and their effect on vocabulary retention, which is an important aspect of developing the language skills and being functional in a foreign language. The memory strategies in this research, word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic, attempt to create mental linkages and to apply images so the learners can learn and recall words better.

Word Cards. Word cards promote deliberate vocabulary learning effectively because they facilitate the learning of a large number of words in a short time and the recalling of them for a very long time (Nation, 2008; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000). In this regard, Troutt-Ervin (1990) indicated that some studies have proven the effectiveness of this mnemonic technique and keyword method for learning foreign language. DeWitt (2010) carried out a research study to provide memory-enhancing strategies for students with or without disabilities to develop supplementary English material for the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) vocabulary instruction which is a college admission test applied in the United States. The memory-enhancing strategies were mnemonic devices that targeted specific vocabulary and provided practice using visual aids that could help learners encode new information and retrieve it easily. She concluded that students preferred and enjoyed the use of the mnemonic strategies more than traditional instruction. These findings indicate that mnemonic strategies provided the low proficiency language learners of this study the opportunity to memorize their vocabulary to ensure they can store words and have fun at the same time.

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The basic limitations of the word cards strategy are (1) the students fail to directly access the meaning of the unknown L2 words because they focus their attention on the L1 translation of the words. This could prevent the students from developing an independent lexicon. (2) The students could believe that vocabulary learning is an easy task that does not demand hard work so the words may not be committed to memory (Thornbury, 2004). Despite these limitations, the fact that word cards use translation and seem easy to use does not mean that the students can apply this strategy without instruction. For example, when students are learning this strategy, they need to know that some kinds of words can interfere with other words when they are put in a set of cards; consequently, students will struggle to retrieve those words from their memories (Thornbury, 2004). Hence, some considerations should be taken into account in its application such as avoiding combinations of words that are (a) similar in spelling or sound, (b) similar in meaning but not exactly the same, (c) opposites, and (d) members of a lexical set (Nation, 2008). Additionally, research in this deliberate vocabulary learning strategy has provided useful guidelines about how to organize and develop this word card technique (Nation, 2001; Pressley, Levin & Delaney, 1982). Table 3 summarizes some suggestions made by Nation to apply this strategy.

Table 3

An Outline Syllabus for Training Learners to Use Word Cards (Nation, 2008, p. 108).

| Part of the strategy | Training | Monitoring |
|---|--|--|
| Choosing words or phrases to put on cards. | Show learners how to choose words and phrases to meet their language use needs. Explain to learners about interference and the type of interfering relationships. | Observe the learners' skill in finding this information. |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Going through the cards | Explain about changing the order of the cards. Train learners in the word strategy. Get learners to learn the most common 15-20 prefixes. | Encourage learners to reflect and report on their recent experience with cards. Test the learners' ability to apply the word part strategy |
| Repeatedly coming back to the words. | Explain about spaced and distributed learning. Get learners to report on their success rates over a series of spaced repetitions. | |
| Motivating to use and keep using the strategy. | Get learners to work in pairs testing each other on their word cards. Encourage learners to keep a graph of repetition and successful recalls. | Check to be sure the learners are making and using the cards. |

Based on Table 3, learners should be informed about how to choose the word, how to avoid interference, and how to use the cards and to space their use. Additionally, in order for them to be motivated to use the strategy, learners should have the opportunity to work in pairs. In so doing, the students will have the opportunity to re-meet vocabulary and take more responsibility for their own vocabulary learning.

Thornbury (2004) provided useful activities to develop in subsequent class lessons in order to train learners in this strategy and encourage the independent use of the words such as peer teaching and testing, association games, guess my word, ghost writing, and categories. These activities can engage learners in the use of the strategy and foster the vocabulary learning in class. This means that word cards should not be seen as an inflexible strategy; teachers could exploit it in the class in many ways to benefit students' language learning.

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Association with pictures. This key word technique is based on an image or picture which represents and associates the meaning of the L1 word with the meaning of L2 (Nation 2008). Studies have proved that the mental image-keyword method is highly effective. Oberg (2011) compared a CALL image-based method versus a paper card image-based method to determine which one could favor the acquisition and retention of ten known vocabulary items among first-year Japanese university students divided in two groups and found that both were valid ways of studying vocabulary. The study proved that these picture methods equally benefited the acquisition and retention of vocabulary. The research findings indicated that participants enjoyed studying vocabulary with their respective methods and found them beneficial for vocabulary learning. This research concluded that although there was no significant difference among the two methods, the subjects stated a slight preference for a technology application approach over a flashcard approach in spite of the higher percentage of students who expressed their willingness to study vocabulary with a card-based approach. The researcher suggested that in contexts where “CALL development is not possible[,]... student-authored picture cards are a good alternative” (Oberg, 2011, 131). This picture strategy is particularly important because this indicates that images could work to help the learners attach the meaning of the word to a picture and make the words easier to remember. Additionally, in context such as this school where most of the students do not have access to computers at home or in their English class, images could be generated by the participants to link the form and the meaning the words in a meaningful personal way.

Kobayashi (2010) developed a study to determine the effectiveness of the image-keyword method on Kanji acquisition for beginner-level Japanese language learners whose L1 was English and reported that learners who self-generated their image-keyword had higher recall than

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those who were given the key-word or who did not create them. Miller (2011) studied the effects of using three different visual approaches to vocabulary instruction on students' engagement and perceptions with twelve 11th grade students enrolled in an academic English course and found that each visual approach helped to increase student engagement and perceptions of their learning. As Goll (2004) stated, "the more strongly you imagine ... a situation, the more effectively it will stick in your mind for later recall. The image you use in your mnemonic can be as ...vivid... as you like, as long as it helps you to remember" (p. 309). This indicates that the form of the image or illustration can have a strong effect on students' long term memory and that the use of visual aids such as drawings can enable learners to create connections between their previous vocabulary knowledge and the visual representation of words. This could make the vocabulary learning relevant to their lives because this strategy could give the participants of this study the opportunity to bring their experience to the class and connect it to their vocabulary learning in their drawings.

Association with a Topic. A story, topic, or situation can also be the vehicle for vocabulary learning. In this way, the students can build up an association network (Thornbury, 2004) centered on the topic. Learners connect the topic, story or situation to other words that are associated to it by taking into account the context in which they are presented. Arias (2003) claimed that "the presentation of vocabulary by means of stories and topic oriented context can help learners memorize it more easily than just giving them just a list of words" (p. 118) to be learnt out of context in an isolated way. Thus, using diagrams to link the relationship of words and their uses in a specific text can help learners visualize the word-connection becoming a powerful visual picture of information that can allow the mind to "see" connections and relationships.

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Research studies have proved that the use of diagrams benefits learning. Brown and Perry (1991) developed a research study in which they compared three learning strategies (keywords, semantic, and keyword-semantic) for ESL vocabulary retention. They found that the keyword method profited vocabulary acquisition for low proficiency learners and that the combined keyword-semantic strategy increased retention. They indicated that these should not be the only strategies to be considered and emphasized the fact that other strategies should be compared to gain an overall picture about vocabulary learning strategies. Idol and Croll (1987) confirmed in their study that explicitly teaching text structures such as the story map enhances reading comprehension for students with learning disabilities. Bos and Anders (1990) claimed that a greater recall comprehension and vocabulary learning was developed by the group of learners who used semantic mapping as compared to the group who used other strategies. Ae-Hwa, Vaughn, Wanzek, and Wei (2004) found that the improvement of reading comprehension overall for students with LD was associated with the use of graphic organizers such as semantic organizers, framed outlines, and cognitive maps with and without a mnemonic. Thus, based on the research findings, the use of graphics could expand students' range of words since these allow learners to visualize the relationship of the words. In addition, its use could foster learners to think about how to build the connection of the words which will help them not only to recall the words but also to develop their thinking skills. Therefore, word-connections associated with the topic of a fable or its content as a vocabulary strategy could benefit the acquisition of vocabulary since this could allow learners to see graphically the relationship of the words and foster learners to think about how to build that relationship.

It is important that low-proficiency learners develop a second lexicon in the foreign language and increase the size of their vocabulary knowledge by being trained in vocabulary

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learning strategies like word cards, word association with a mental image or picture, and word association with a story, situation, or topic through short readings. These kinds of strategies and materials can help learners train their long term memory in order to acquire words and recall them by meeting vocabulary repeatedly.

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Chapter Three: Research Design

This chapter presents the design of the research study, the type of study conducted, the context, the participants, the researcher's role, and the instruments as well as some ethical considerations to validate the study. Additionally, this describes the data collection procedures and the design and validation of the instruments and procedures with reference to the piloting.

Type of Study

This research was a qualitative action research study because it included the diagnosis of a problem, the implementation of a proposal and the evaluation of the proposal, which are the three basic aspects of this type of research (Cohen & Manion, 1994). This required an analysis of the context and what was happening in it to determine a practical response to an immediate problem observed in the class (Nunan, 1992). Additionally, this was a qualitative research study because it was carried out in a natural setting, using the methods of qualitative research (Nunan, 1992). In this case, the natural setting of this research was a public school where the researcher taught English. In this context, the researcher observed, analyzed, reflected, and made decisions in order to design a proposal to help 11th grade learners with their lack of vocabulary retention. This pedagogical intervention and the research results were supported by “the process of theorizing and testing our own, as well as other people's ideas and theories in practice” (Arhar, Holly & Kasten, 2001, p. 9).

Research Setting and Participants

Context. The pedagogical intervention of this action research took place in an urban technical state high school in Espinal, Tolima, Colombia. The students and the families in

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school community are identified as economically disadvantaged; they were in Strata 1 and 2 on government scale from 0 to 6. Most of the families receive subsidies from the government because of the Strata and because they have limited resources. They also receive an educational subsidy as long as their children attend school. Therefore, the school's mission is to empower learners with technological skills in industrial mechanics, automobile mechanics, metal work, electricity, drawing, and computing through vocational subjects so that students are capable of applying those skills to respond to their personal and communal economic needs. The vision of this school as stated in its PEI is to promote among its learners awareness of being productive and responsible in their decision-making, so an ethic of work can be developed among the learners through practical technical programs. The other subjects follow a traditional academic approach in which learners need to learn specific content based on the standards set by the National Ministry of Education guidelines for English learning for each one of the compulsory subjects.

Participants. Although the entire eleventh grade group was engaged in the teaching-researching experience, twelve of thirty 11th graders consented to take part in the instructional class activities by handing in their own consent letters, their parents' consent letters, and the school director's permission. The average age of these participants was seventeen, they had been learning English for five years, and ten students were in A- and two students were in A1 English level.

Since the participants failed to remember vocabulary they had learned in previous years as observed in the two preliminary class activities and their A- and A1 level achieved for their low scores in the Mock SABER exam indicated the student had a low-language performance and

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showed they needed to extend their limited range of words and train their LTM so they would be able to use vocabulary when it was required. Students needed to recognize, recall and use new words when they met and re-met them. They needed to learn to make mental or visual connections that made the words easy to recall, and to develop a sense of success in their learning process.

According to Piaget's considerations, learners from 11 to 16 years of age are in the formal operational stage. This means that these 11th graders are capable of abstraction, of a conscious use of grammatical generalizations that benefits their formal thinking, and that allows them to transfer a concrete experience or direct perception to a language example (Ausubel, 1964) in their first language. Despite the students' operational condition, they were unable to do this kind of language abstraction in a foreign language. For instance, when explanations were given about grammar aspects in class, some students in this group occasionally asked for clarifications in order to understand how the language works, but just a few of them could associate their previous knowledge with the language they were being exposed to. Thus, the students in class needed to foster their thinking skills to be able to activate previous knowledge and learn the language they were learning since at their age students could profit from some various explanations, or training, that could enable them to make relevant connections between what they knew and what they were being exposed to learn in the class.

In regards to their affective needs, these teenagers usually worked individually or in pairs in class, so they need to learn to work with their other peers to support each other in the learning process and be more confident when they participate in the whole class. Students needed to have a real purpose to learn English and improve their confidence when using the target language.

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Some of them were unable to express their ideas in an oral or written way because they did not know the correct meaning, form, or use of the words. For example, some of the students cannot communicate simple explanations when they arrive late to the class. To the question: “Why are you late?” These have been some of the students’ answers: “*me* –pointing at himself- *was in baño,*” “*I was...*” -and pointing to a soft drink, and “*I was eat...dinner.*”

Since group acceptance is a relevant need and being rejected is a common concern among teenagers at this age, most learners in this class were reluctant to take an active part in lessons because they were afraid of making mistakes and being mocked by their partners (Brown, 2007). Students needed to build their confidence in the use of the target language in front of the classmates, and see mistakes as a natural part of the learning process. In addition, they needed to gain confidence to work with students different from their usual classmates in a cooperative and an autonomous way. Students needed to develop various peer and group work interactions so they could have a better performance as a whole class.

Researcher’s role. During the development of this research, the researcher was a teacher-researcher who taught classes to 11th graders of the school in which this study was carried out and who was interested in finding a solution oriented to these students’ lack of ability to learn and recall words. Because action research is a reflective process aimed at changes and improvements in practice (Burns, 2007), the teacher as a researcher designed a proposal and collected data systematically about the students’ impressions and her own observations related to the memory strategies implemented and their effect on the students’ vocabulary retention.

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Data Collection Instruments

Two types of questionnaires, a researcher's journal, and vocabulary tests were the instruments used to gather data. These instruments were planned to collect students' viewpoints and researcher's observations and to verify students' vocabulary retention during the pedagogical intervention.

Questionnaires. Seliger (2008) indicated that questionnaires have advantages in collecting data because "they can be given to large group of subjects at the same time, subjects tend to share information of a sensitive nature more easily, the data is more uniform and standard, and since they are usually given to all subjects of the research at the same time, the data are more accurate" (p. 172). Based on this, the questionnaires would help to gather the twelve students' viewpoint quickly and easily during class while the intervention was being carried out.

Thus, two types of questionnaires were aimed at accessing students' impressions regarding the effectiveness of the three memory strategies for vocabulary retention in which they had been trained during the implementation of the study. The first type of questionnaire (see Appendix A) was applied as soon as each one of the three memory strategies was administered in order to gradually collect information related to each one of them. The second type of questionnaire (see Appendix B) was applied after the second and third strategies to collect the students' viewpoints when comparing the effectiveness of the second strategy with the first one, and then the third with the second. This also included a final questionnaire that evaluated the three memory strategies from the students' point of view to determine which one was more effective for their vocabulary retention.

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Researcher's journal. Journals are documents that have many advantages for researchers; as Wallace (2008) indicates, “they provide an effective means of identifying variables that are important to individual teachers and learners, they enhance awareness about the way a teacher teaches and a student learns, they enable the researcher to relate classroom events and examine trends emerging for them” (p. 63). Hence, this tool was a useful resource to keep a written record of the teacher-researcher's reflections during the pedagogical intervention so this information could be triangulated with the students' insights.

The researcher's journal instrument (see Appendix C) helped teacher-researcher gather information about the effectiveness of each memory strategy on students' vocabulary retention during the controlled stage of the lesson. In these lesson stages, learners had to recall and use the vocabulary learnt in specific activities such as writing words and matching them to their meanings or picture, filling the gap of a short text with some missing words from a box, and filling the gaps with the missing words which were replaced with pictures.

Tests. It was taken into account that “without testing, there is no reliable means of knowing how effective a teaching sequence [in this case, a memory strategy] has been. Testing provides a form of feedback, both for learners and teachers” (Thornbury, 2002, p. 129). The main purpose of using vocabulary tests was to measure the effectiveness of the strategies on vocabulary retention, to compare the results with the students' viewpoints and with the researcher's own observations, and in this way to triangulate the information gathered.

Nevertheless, these instruments were piloted one month before the implementation with a different 11th grade group which the teacher-researcher also taught in this school while it was still possible to change, revise, and modify any item in the procedure so that the reliability and

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validity could be increased and the required information could be gathered to answer the research question (Seliger & Shohamy, 2008).

Validity of the instruments. As a professional, the teacher-researcher needed to be sure that the instruments designed for the implementation allowed the researcher to collect data that would respond to the research question and objectives of the study. The data needed to reflect what the research was studying and testing to ensure the research results was valid (Wallace, 2008). Therefore, the corroboration of the information was important to establish the credibility of the research conclusions. The data provided by the instruments should be explicit, consistent, and accurate to ensure the reliability of the study (Wallace, 2008). Therefore, the data was collected from more than one perspective through the three different instruments (six questionnaires, seven vocabulary tests, and the researcher's journal). Thus, the researcher could provide evidence from students' viewpoints, the researcher's observation and the scores of the vocabulary tests to corroborate the information collected and build up consistent conclusions, which were the triangulation of the collected data during this research study (Sagor, 2005).

For example, the two main objectives were (1) to test and evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the vocabulary strategies to acquire vocabulary through fables and (2) to compare the vocabulary strategies in order to determine which one was more effective on vocabulary retention. It was useful not only to apply or administer questionnaires to know students' viewpoints as soon as each strategy was applied, but also to observe, identify, and reflect on the students' performance at the end of the strategy. Finally, by thinking and writing her observations and answering the five journal question during each session, the researcher had

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the opportunity to reflect on the strategy itself and its effectiveness in helping students commit the vocabulary to their memory.

Ethical considerations. Loue (2002) claimed that “virtue ethics urges the provision of confidentiality and privacy as the practical manifestation of reasoning with respect to the research situation and feeling for those participating. The concern for confidentiality and privacy is reflected across the relevant international documents” (p. 145). As a way to inform this research and guarantee the confidentiality of students’ identities, consent forms (see Appendix D) were issued to students, parents, and the director of the school to obtain their permission to be part of this research, to access to the information gathered during the process and to analyze it after the research implementation. It was ethical for participants who were involved in this action research to understand the nature, duration, and methodology of the study; hence, the consent letter served to explain the study, regulate the relationship between the participants and the teacher-researcher, and safeguard participants from invasions of their privacy and the confidentiality of the information (Loue, 2000). Thus, number codes replaced the real names of the students, the vocabulary tests were not graded, and they were guaranteed that their viewpoints and research results would not affect their grade in the subject.

Data Collection Procedure

This study consisted of applying three memory strategies carried out in three modules: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a fable. Each module had three sessions (three short fables) that were used as follows: (1) to model the use of the strategy by the teacher and (2 and 3) to apply the strategy by students. During each module, the researcher collected data by means of a vocabulary test, a questionnaire, and the researcher’s journal.

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Additionally, three comparative questionnaires were applied to identify students' insights about which strategy was best for vocabulary retention. These questionnaires were (1) comparing word cards and association with pictures, (2) comparing association with pictures with association with a topic or a story, and finally (3) comparing the three strategies. This procedure allowed the researcher to enrich data to answer and triangulate the research question.

Design and Validation of the Instruments and Procedures

This school had two groups of 11th graders in which the researcher taught them English classes two-one hour lessons per week. The research instruments were piloted with one of the groups that had thirty eleventh graders who consented to take part in the piloted instructional class activity one month before the implementation of the study. The implementation was carried with the other group in which the twelve participants were involved. Before the implementation, the researcher designed, socialized, and revised the questionnaires, the aspects that needed to be observed and kept in the journal, and the test during the research sessions at the University, so these were addressed to respond to the research question and the objectives of this study. Then, the instruments were piloted in order to make it possible to change, revise, and modify any item to ensure the required data could be collected. For that reason, a word card strategy was applied and the students were requested to take a vocabulary test and fill out a questionnaire at the end of the strategy. Likewise, during this session the researcher kept a written record of her reflections to determine to what extent the items of their research journal let researcher gather information that responded to the research question. Afterward, the changes were presented again in research sessions and with the research director and revised based on the research questions, the objectives of the study and the data collected in the piloting. Seliger and

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Shohamy (2008) stated that “through the process of item analysis it is possible to ensure that questions provide ... meaningful information” (p. 189). Therefore, these procedures allowed the researcher to improve the instruments and increase the validity of the information.

Initially, the researcher did not know how to design the final vocabulary test (see Appendix E) that measured the students’ retention of the ninety words they would have been learning during the implementation. However, the thesis director helped the researcher realize the need to focus on determining which strategy was more effective, and the professor in charge of Seminar on Research Project agreed that the researcher should choose just 30 words, ten for each strategy, and ask learners to write their meanings and how they were able to recall them. In so doing, the researcher would be able to know which strategy was more effective and she would have the students’ reasons to consider one strategy more useful than the other.

The vocabulary tests were designed based on Nation’s instructions about the features that vocabulary tests should have and the kinds of tests that could be applied. Researchers should use multiple-choice and translation with word form recognition to determinate whether the learners are able to remember the words they had learnt during each reading (Nation, 2008). In regards to the reliability, the vocabulary tests needed to contain at least 30 items or points of assessments, its form should be familiar to the learners, and the marking key and criteria should take into account of most possible variations of answers. In regards to validity, the test should be used for the purpose for which was designed; it should suit the level of the students and should be taken seriously by the learners to avoid cheating. In addition, Thornbury (2004) also indicated that “the multiple choice format can be used with isolated words, words in a sentence context of words in a whole test” (p. 133). Accordingly, in this research study, word card strategy was

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tested taking into account translation and filling the gaps providing the first letter of the words (Thornbury, 2002) (see Appendix F). Association with pictures was tested using fill-in-the-gap exercises (see Appendix G) as an alternative to multiple choice in which words were replaced by pictures. Association with a topic was tested using similar fill-in-the-gap exercises but with the words provided (see Appendix H). In this way, the researcher could identify if the strategies had enabled the students to learn, recall, and increase the number of words learned.

In summary, piloting, modifying, and applying the research instruments gave the researcher the opportunity to gather data to accomplish the objectives of the research study and to bring together reliable and verifiable information.

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Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention

This chapter provides a description and justification of the steps and processes followed to identify the effectiveness of three memory strategies: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic to acquire vocabulary through fables and compare them in order to determine which one was more effective on vocabulary retention. This includes a sample of the lesson plan implemented, based on the ICELT³ lesson plan model, which contains a description of how the lessons were carried out with each one of the memory strategies.

Action Plan

In order to guide the process of the study, the researcher designed a general timeline for the research project (see Appendix I) and a specific timeline for the data collection and implementation (see Appendix J). Because all of the participants were under eighteen, the students were informed about the objectives of the study and consent letters were signed during the pre-stage of the implementation. Because the teacher-researcher wanted to ensure the participants understood how to use the vocabulary strategies implemented in this study, they were trained in each strategy and each one was repeated twice to provide participants the opportunity to use it during the while-stage of the implementation. Questionnaires, vocabulary tests and researcher's journals needed to be implemented to collect data as was explained in the research design. The analysis of the data and the conclusion were completed during the final-stage of this study.

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The instructional design

The researcher implemented the study in twenty one hours over ten weeks in the second academic semester of the academic school year. The researcher assigned seven hours for each strategy and planned three lessons for each one. For implementing the vocabulary strategies the teacher-researcher designed a lesson plan based on the ICELT format (see Appendix K) since this model enabled the researcher to consider the students' language knowledge in order to anticipate possible problems and plan possible solutions, to decide about the materials to be used, and to organize the procedures in the class.

Since learners would be introduced to the use of memory strategies, these strategies were sequenced in the following order: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic. Additionally, the researcher decided to train learners in each one of the strategies and assigned in each module a time for learners to apply the steps of the strategy and become familiar with them. The steps to apply word cards were adapted from Nation's (2007) and Thornbury's (2004) instructions and were organized as follows:

1. Learners made small cards about 4cm. by 2cm.
2. Learners wrote a word on one side and its translation into their first language.
3. Learners tried to recall what was written on each card by checking in pairs.
4. Words that were easy to recall were placed on the bottom of the pack. Words that caused difficulty were moved to the top of the pack so that they could be looked at again soon.

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5. After going through the pack once or twice, it was put away; ready to be reviewed in about half an hour. Nevertheless, the cards had to be shuffled periodically to avoid “serial effects”.

Since the researcher did not find any specific steps to apply the association with pictures strategy, the research adapted the keyword technique (Nation, 2008) to set the steps of the strategy that students should follow:

1. Students thought of an image that could represent the meaning of the word.
2. Pairs of students checked the meaning of the words using their picture charts and books.
3. Pairs of students checked the vocabulary at increasingly spaced intervals of time.

In the case of association with a topic, no model was found to provide some instruction, the researcher created these steps:

1. Students built an association network centered on the topic of the reading.
2. Students connected other associated words to the network.
3. Students compared their association network with a classmate’s to extend the information.
4. Students read the fable again and adjusted the information of their association network of words.
5. Students tried to recall the words by checking in pairs.

This training on each strategy always covered the first material of each model and the researcher did not collect data during that part of the module. The number of modules, sessions,

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materials, and hours planned for this intervention is illustrated in Table 4. As it was explained, the first fable in each session was used to model the strategy; therefore, an extra-hour was planned for this demonstration and practice.

Table 4

Methodology plan. Description of Modules, Sessions, Materials, and Hours Planned.

| Module | Number of Sessions | Materials Nine fables | Time | Total time |
|--|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Word Cards | A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Fox and The Crow • The Girl and Her Bucket • Insulting The King | 3 hours 2 hours 2 hours | |
| Association with pictures | B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ox and The Frog • Visiting The Lion's Cave • The Tortoise and The Hare | 3 hours 2 hours 2 hours | 21 hours |
| Association with a topic or story | C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Boy Who Cried Wolf • The Lion and the Mouse • The Lion's share | 3 hours 2 hours 2 hours | |

Materials

Based on Table 4, the reader can observe that in this study, each student used three short fables (see Appendix L) for each one of the memory strategies. The learners chose to use these short narratives from a set of three topics: sports, fashion, and tales that they were offered. The students explained that they chose this material because they enjoyed it and had a previous knowledge of the content in their native language so this could help them to learn the vocabulary and to have a significant context to remember the words. The teacher-researcher chose the texts taking into account that their size was short, the number and difficulty level of the unknown words did not make the text beyond the students understanding (Nation, 2008; Thornbury, 2004) and they contained the basic structures that these students had already learned in their English

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classes. As Thornbury (2004) indicated “for vocabulary building purposes, texts... have enormous advantages over learning words from lists...and can be subjected to intensive...lexical study” (p. 53). These short texts served as a source from which students could select unknown words to use in vocabulary strategies. In this study the participants were not using the short texts to infer meaning of words as they read because this would demand skills that “include[d] making predictions, using context clues, forming conclusions, and locating specific information [that although could] contribute to vocabulary growth [especially with high proficiency students, vocabulary grow was] not the purpose of any of them” (Folse, 2007, p. 83). These low level students had neither skills nor sufficient vocabulary to succeed at this task, so they would benefit more from direct attention on vocabulary learning that could be accomplished through vocabulary strategies.

Learning is a process that, as Thornbury (2004) indicated, “takes time to establish connections” (p. 20). In this process of making connections “it is clear from learning theory that a person [in this case, each participant] will use whatever previous experience he or she has had with language to facilitate the second language learning process ” (Brown, 2007, p. 102). In a foreign language context such as the case of this study, the participants could benefit from materials such as fables from which the students have previous background knowledge. This material provides English cultural background and presents the words in context which could enrich the students’ vocabulary learning experience. These fables could help the students create mental links and use their imagination along with the content of the fables to illustrate the meanings of selected words.

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Hedge (2000) claimed that “if the development of communicative language ability is the goal of classroom learning... the language should be a mean not an end” (p. 57). This means that language should be seen as a means of communication. Therefore, in class, words should not be presented in isolation; they should be presented in a context that indicates a natural use of language and that could allow learners to generate associations. Hatch and Brown (1995) indicated the need for “having resources for encountering new words, ...getting a clear image, either visual or auditory or both...of the new words, learning the meaning of the words, and making strong memory connection between the forms and the meaning of the words [them, so that] the overall result should be more vocabulary learned” (p. 373). The use of fables with common shared words and the use of the vocabulary strategies with a spaced checking of the meaning of the words (Nation, 2008) could give these students the opportunity to meet and re-meet words to enhance their learning. The strategies would give learners the time to make associations, to work with the meaning of the words, and to illustrate them through drawings or network-association with the content of the fables.

While reading the text the first time, the students underlined unknown vocabulary in the text, and then with the teacher’s guidance, they selected the fifteen new words to be learnt and memorized. This number was the result of a mutual agreement among the learners after being asked about the number of words they would like to learn for each story. The teacher and the students practiced pronouncing each word together. Additionally, students worked with small cards to create their set of words, pencils to draw the pictures that represented the new words, and their notebooks to write the associated network of words to a topic. In the case of association with picture strategy, the participants were instructed to draw a picture. They could use the content of the fable or their previous knowledge to draw a picture that was meaningful

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for them to remember the meaning of the word. In case of association with a topic, the students were instructed to use the title of the fable or its topic to create their semantic map that could include aspects such as characters, settings and actions. Finally, the vocabulary tests were created based on the lexical items taken from the stories and most of them were tested taking into account the content of the fables (see Appendices F, G, and H).

Lesson Plan

Main aim. It was expected that by the end of the lessons, the students would be acquainted with three memory strategies to memorize and recall ninety words learned in nine fables.

Subsidiary aims. The subsidiary aims were addressed to introduce learners to the strategies: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic, and to develop a set of activities that allowed learners to recall vocabulary.

Assumed knowledge. When the pedagogical intervention started, students had learnt simple present, simple present progressive and future with going to, present perfect tense as well as the past simple, modals and the conditionals according to the school syllabus. Additionally, they had learnt how to describe people, and they also knew vocabulary for clothes, professions, family, numbers, and animals.

Sub-skill. Vocabulary is essential to develop the four language skills and to master a foreign language. This is why students needed to learn strategies to train their LTM to store and recall vocabulary.

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Anticipating problems and planning solutions. By considering the students' language, affective, and cognitive needs, the researcher could anticipate some possible solutions to the problems that students could face when the vocabulary strategies were applied, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Anticipated Problems and Possible Solutions.

| Anticipated problems | Planned solutions |
|---|--|
| Students might not understand how to use the memory strategies. | Teacher would explain each memory strategy technique step by step and model its application. |
| Students might have difficulties memorizing the words. | Teacher would ask learners to check the vocabulary in pairs during different periods of time in the class to see which words the partner remembered. |
| Learners might struggle choosing the words to be learned. | Teacher would develop a pre-reading activity to help them select the vocabulary. |

Methodology. The sample of Table 6 (see the other part in Appendix K) shows the methodology of the lesson plan, including the procedures for each one of the memory strategies. There, the researcher planned for each of the stages, the aims of the stages, the procedures, the time, and the kind of teacher-student interaction.

Table 6

Methodology of a Generic Lesson Plan.

| Stage | Aim | Procedure | | | Time and interaction |
|----------------------|--|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| | | Teacher and student activity | | | |
| | | Word cards | Association with a picture | Association with a story | |
| Warm-up | Introducing the topic of the reading. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher wrote the title of the reading on the board to elicit information from the students. | | | T-Ss 5 minutes |
| Pre-reading activity | Skimming to get the general idea of the text | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The class was divided into pairs. Each pair wrote 7 words associated with the title of the story (see Appendix L). | | | T-Ss 3 minutes |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students were asked to read the text and compare their written words with the words found most frequently in the text. Teacher checked students' answers and wrote them on the board. | | | S-S 7 minutes |
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students chose two words that best summarize the story. | | | T-Ss 3 minutes |
| Lead in | Going through the strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher asked students for the new words they found in the reading and wrote them on the board. Teacher explained to learners about interference and the type of interference they needed to avoid. Students and teacher agreed to choose 15 words per session (two one-hour classes) to learn. | | | GW3 5 minutes |

Chapter Five: Data Analysis

This chapter presents the data analysis method and procedures followed in this study to answer the research question. It also includes the findings that emerged from the data analysis and the theory derived from this analysis.

Procedure for Data Analysis

For this study, the analysis includes aspects of quantitative data analysis, the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 2008), data management (Hubbard & Miller, 1993) in the comparison of students' perceptions about the vocabulary strategies and their effectiveness on vocabulary retention. In doing so, the quantitative data represented by the scores that students achieved during each vocabulary test allowed the researcher to identify the strategy that produced the best results on vocabulary retention and provided a different perspective that supported the qualitative analysis and made it more valid. In this way, the triangulation of the data was taken into account in order to corroborate the findings from the other data collection instruments and to strengthen the level of the analysis.

Table 7

Data Analysis Methods to Be Followed during this Study.

| Data collection instruments | Nature of data | Analysis method |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <i>Research teacher's journal</i> | Qualitative | Categorizing |
| <i>Questionnaires</i> | Qualitative | Categorizing |
| <i>Students' vocabulary tests</i> | Quantitative | Comparison |

The researcher systematized that data by applying the stages proposed by Hubbard and Miller (1993) as follows: management of data, data reduction, and data display and verification for conducting qualitative analysis.

Data management

During the study, the students were required to apply the memory strategies that the researcher implemented in three modules: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic. Each module had three sessions (three fables) in which (1) the students learnt to use the strategy and then, (2 and 3) they applied it by themselves. During the second and third sessions, the researcher kept a written record of her reflections, and the students took a vocabulary test and filled out a questionnaire at the end of each module.

After finishing each module, the information gathered was organized in an Excel file that included the date, a summary of each student's answers for each question of the questionnaire, the vocabulary test, and the research journal. In order to code data more specifically, the researcher inserted a descriptor word and a category label into the chart. She decided to use numbers to replace the names of the twelve participants to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, the questionnaires and the tests were organized in folders to save the information.

Data Reduction

The researcher used the *open coding* technique proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1990) to analyze data. After organizing data from students' answers to the questionnaires, the vocabulary tests and the researcher's journal in Excel files, the researcher used *color coding* to categorize the information of each one of the instruments (see Appendix M for a sample of this procedure).

The research question was taken into account in order to decide what was important to code and what should be omitted. Then, the researcher identified patterns that emerged from the information in order to name, group, and find the relationship among them

Data Display and Verification

During this process, information was read several times to reduce it and to establish patterns, categories, and subcategories which allowed the researcher to triangulate the data. This was the axial coding. This helped the researcher check for possible biases by reviewing evidence that supported or refuted the research question. Hence, the data collected was compared through the instruments to validate the research findings.

| | Word cards | Association with picture | Association with a topic |
|--------------------------|---|--|---|
| Insights | Didactic tool Learning how to learn vocabulary | Didactic tool Pictures are more vivid than words Good strategy Personal representation of words | Didactic tool More difficult strategy |
| Affective factors | Motivating Fun Innovative Interesting | Motivating Fun | Boring Less interesting |
| Cognitive factors | Recall words in both languages Improvement Memorize Learn (meaning and spelling) Review Increase number of words | Recall (spelling and words) Learn (easily and more) Memorize Associate | Difficult recalling Memorize Difficult to associate |
| Reading | Understanding Focus on specific words | Understanding “Recognizing” the words | |
| Interaction | Checking one another | Checking one another Interchange of ideas | Mutual support Interchange of ideas |
| Improvement | | Performance of the activities Increase the number of words | Mixing association with a picture with association with a topic |

Figure 1. Axial Coding

Categories

After analyzing the data from the instruments used in the implementation of the three different strategies, the information was grouped into a core category: *vocabulary strategies as didactic tools*, with its corresponding two subcategories: *affective factors* and *cognitive factors*, in order to start answering the research question as displayed in the following map.

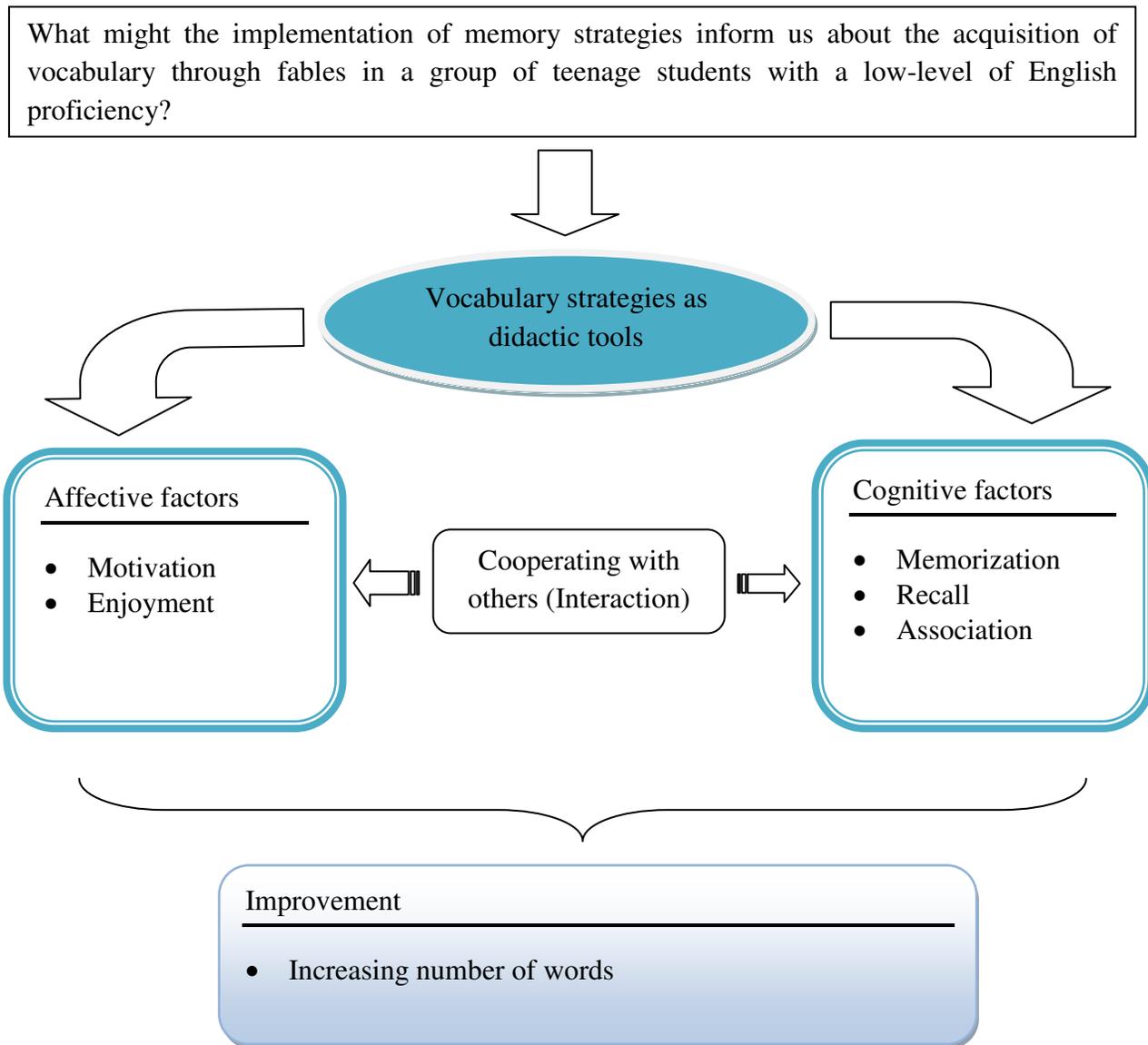


Figure 2. Core category: vocabulary strategies as didactic tools.

The analysis of the core category indicated memory strategies were perceived by students as *didactic tools* that involved *affective* and *cognitive factors* in the memorization and retrieval of vocabulary. These factors allowed the participants to increase the number of words and improve their reading understanding. The findings showed that the students' perception of the difficulty of the strategy affected their motivation and caused them to choose one strategy over another in spite of the test results. Additionally, these factors appeared to be influenced by social strategies such as interaction.

Below, the researcher will explain the subcategories that emerged from the data analysis and illustrate them with the findings.

Category: Memory strategies as didactic tools

Subcategory: Affective factors. The first subcategory, *affective factors*, indicates that word cards and association with pictures strategies were seen as easy-to-handle didactic tools that made the vocabulary learning process interesting and effective, which fostered students' motivation towards their use.

“es una forma interesante y entretenida de aprender” S2
(Question No. 2. First questionnaire. Word Cards)

“...Porque como dije es una estrategia buena porque es didáctica y no es aburrida.” S6
(Question No. 5. Second questionnaire. Comparing word cards with association with pictures.)

“con esta estrategia no me da tanta pereza para repasar vocabulario” S12
(Question No. 5. First questionnaire. Word cards.)

In respect to the psychology of learning, Obringer (2001) claimed that “making the learning more fun –interesting- is what makes it more effective” (p. 1) because this appeals to the students' need to enjoy what they are doing and what they are learning. In addition, Oxford

(1990) stated that “positive emotions and attitudes can make the language learning more effective and enjoyable” (p. 9). Hence, the fact that the participants found vocabulary strategies interesting and fun was important because it was the first time these students with a low level of language had applied them. At the beginning of the implementation, the participants were unwilling to memorize the vocabulary at their homes and memorized the words in the class. As S2 indicated, it may be possible that the students initially considered words to be a boring strategy: “*porque es más fácil con una imagen que con solo palabras aburridas.*” Nevertheless, after they become familiar with each strategy, the students started to check their materials (cards, pictures, and word-maps) and memorize them at home.

“Most of the students came to the class without their word cards. Some of them told me that they forgot them at home. Others asked me if they could do the word cards in the class. Another started creating their set of words when I told them that we were going to use it.”

(Research journal. Word cards. August 24, 2011)

“My students didn’t seem to be interested in working the strategy at home, but the fact that they checked the words in pairs in the classroom, it challenged them to apply the strategy to learn the words at home. No student wanted his/her partner to remember more words.”

(Research journal. Word cards. September 5, 2011)

“I realize that most of the students come to class with their materials (pictures) on their notebooks or cards and rarely request to have an extra time to check the meaning of the words before their peers do it

(Research Journal. Association with pictures. September 14, 2011)

In these regards, Kojic-Sabo and Lightbown (1999) also found in their study about students’ approaches to vocabulary learning and their relationship to success that due to the difference between an ESL environment and an EFL environment, EFL learners, who are not immersed in an English speaking culture, may need to create opportunities themselves to encounter and practice new English words. They claimed that the students actually do this by engaging in a greater variety of direct, specifically vocabulary-targeted activities, and thus are

willing “to put extra effort into the learning process, to take it outside the classroom, and to build on it by independent learning” (Kojic-Sabo & Lightbown, 1999, p. 16). So, in an EFL environment the fact that learners were willing to create their material, to check the meaning of the words at home, to be prepared to work with it in the class, and to share this experience with their partners indicates that learner found a purpose for their use.

“My students didn’t seem to be interested in working the strategy at home, but the fact that they checked the words in pairs in the classroom, it challenged them to apply the strategy to learn the words at home. No student wanted his/her partner to remember more words.”

(Research journal. Word cards. August 29, 2011.)

“I realized that learners kept up their word cards and their drawings in their books. This surprised me because my students usually do not keep up the things they did after finishing a set of activities.”

(Research journal. Association with pictures. September 21, 2011)

“Es mucho mejor para memorizar y repasar las palabras o vocabulario.” S11
(Question No. 3. First Questionnaire. Word cards. ¿Cómo evalúa la estrategia?)

“Es una buena estrategia y es con la que mejor recuerdo vocabulario.” S6
(Question No. 3. First Questionnaire. Association with pictures. ¿Cómo evalúa la estrategia?)

During the research analysis it was found that factors such as the easy management of the strategy and the interaction with their peers can motivate learners to learn and use a specific vocabulary strategy. Participants found it more motivating to work with vocabulary strategies which supplied their need for manipulation (Brown, 2007) and facilitated their access and retrieval of the information easily such as word cards and association with pictures.

After testing each other the meaning of the words on their word cards as part of the strategy for motivating learners to use and keep them using it (Nation, 2008), the students found it more motivating to keep checking their recall with their peers. The participants seemed interested in speaking with their peers about how they could illustrate and associate the meaning

of words. This social interaction worked as a strategy in which cooperating with their peers implied the absence of competition and instead, showed the presence of group spirit that encouraged their mutual support (Oxford, 1990).

“As a way to figure out how to represent the meaning of the words, the students began asking one another the meanings of words and sharing ideas about what drawing could better illustrate their words. Some of them told their partners something of the story or their personal life that they could use to illustrate the words. When they shared his/her pictures cards and their partner was not able to identify the meaning, the partner asked questions about why the student had represented the word that way. If the picture did not closely represent the meaning of the word, the partner often gave his/her peer a suggestion”

(Research journal. Association with pictures. September 21, 2011)

“las imágenes de uno, la de los demás no son entendible” S10
(Question No. 2. First questionnaire. Association with pictures)

“Porque los dibujos los hacía yo, yo era quien los entendía y sería más fácil para mí aprender los términos.” S7

(Question No. 4. Second questionnaire. Comparing association with pictures with association with a topic)

That also made up for their lack of expertise in illustrating the words –association with a picture- and in connecting their meaning –association with a topic. Some of them drew their pictures on their notebooks; other eight participants, being six of them boys, adapted the word card strategy and replaced the words for pictures. The way they customized each strategy lowered students’ anxiety because this helped them become more confident about what they were doing and how they could illustrate the meaning of the words as S11 indicated *“antes no se me hacía más fácil pero ahora si me ayudó.”* This interaction also moved the students a step towards autonomy. The researcher observed that the participants relied less on the teacher’s instruction.



Figure 3. Interaction of the participants during the class while applying association with pictures strategy.

“La asociación con imágenes. Porque como dije es una estrategia buena porque es didáctica y no es aburrida.” S6

(Question No. 5. Second questionnaire. Word cards and association with pictures)

“...nos ayuda a interactuar, lo cual nos anima a seguir con el proceso.” S5

(Question No.2. First questionnaire. Word cards)

“...Nos motiva a interactuar para pensar en la imagen que puede dibujar para representar las palabras.” S10

(Question No. 2. First questionnaire. Association with pictures)

“Students started to rely more on three students’ leadership and more on their peers and their own ideas. They formed groups and pairs; none of the students worked alone. They began asking one another the meanings of words and sharing ideas about what drawing could better illustrate their words, how to better connect words and represent that connection on the semantic map.”

(Research journal. Association with a topic. October 27, 2011)

Learners were also more interested in working on strategies that allowed them to use visual personal learning styles such as association with pictures. As Brown (2008) stated, visual learners “tend to prefer reading and studying charts, drawing and other graphic information” (p. 129), and pictures gave them the opportunity to take advantage of their visual learning style and their language experience to think about the meaning of the words and look for the best way to illustrate them so that they can retrieve their meaning through their visual representation.

“Porque las imágenes son más llamativas para el ser humano, lo cual ayuda a que me centrara en el tema e hiciera volar mi imaginación y memorización.”S5

(Question No. 2. Second questionnaire. Association with pictures and association with a topic)

“Porque cuando le preguntan las palabras se me viene a la mente la imagen y la forma de escribirlo.”S2

(Question No. 2. Second questionnaire. Word cards and association with pictures)

“Student enjoyed this strategy. They were motivated to work with it. Most of them liked drawing and sharing with their peers how they could illustrate the meaning of the words they were learning.”

(Research journal. Association with pictures. September 21, 2011)

As illustrated in figure 4, the students’ comments on the questionnaires registered a strong preference for association with picture after being compared with (1) word cards, (2) association with a topic and finally (3) among the three strategies. Most of the participants of this study considered that this strategy made their vocabulary learning interesting, fun, and motivating because it was an eye-catching activity. The use of pictures stimulated their imagination, allowed them to use their likes for drawing, and helped them memorize and recall the meaning of the words.

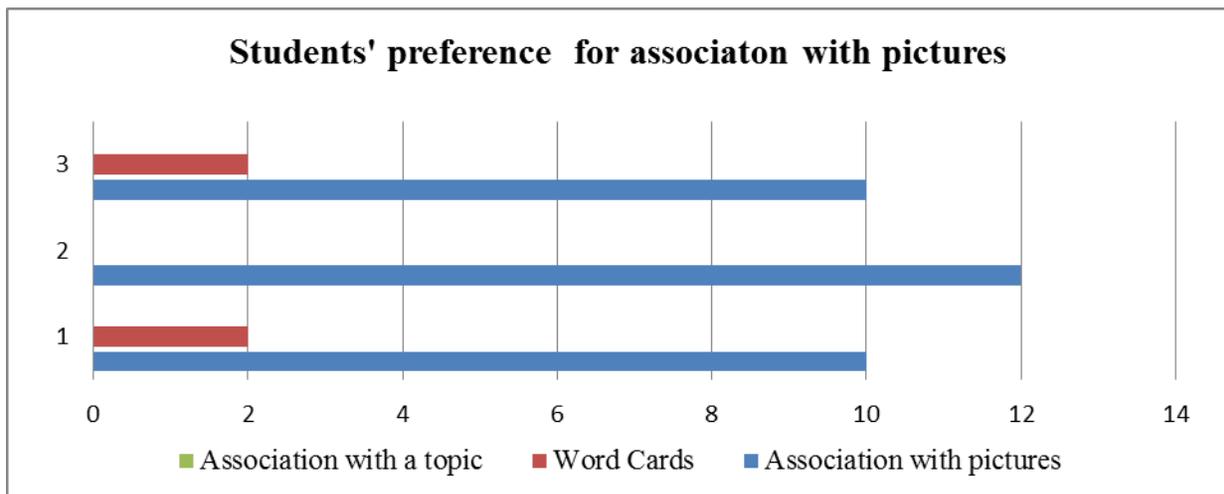


Figure 4. The figure illustrates the results of three comparative questionnaires applied to twelve participants to identify their preference for a specific strategy.

“Porque cuando uno ve las cosas es más fácil acordarse de cómo se escribe y le queda en la mente la imagen.” S9

(Question 2. First questionnaire. Comparing words cards with association with a picture)

“Porque me parece más interesante y más chévere y uno le pone como más empeño en eso.” S12

“Porque así como la trabaje me sirvió y me ayudo a memorizar rápidamente y creo que es muy efectiva para ello.” S4

(Question 5. First questionnaire. Comparing association with pictures with association with a topic.)

“Porque me gusta dibujar y si haciendo esto aprendo inglés se me resulta más fácil.” S7

(Question 5. Second questionnaire. Comparing the three vocabulary strategies.)

The data indicated that vocabulary strategies are didactic tools that involve affective factors such as motivation and enjoyment. These factors had an effect on the participants’ decision-making and these might determine the students’ preferences of one strategy over another. These factors together with the students’ perceptions of their vocabulary learning could influence their preferences.

Subcategory: Cognitive factors. The second subcategory named *cognitive factors* identified that vocabulary strategies were tools that allowed the students to learn, memorize, and recall the meaning of words. Additionally, these strategies helped learners be more aware of the spelling of words.

“...se aprende más rápido las palabras...”S6

(Question No. 2. First questionnaire. Word cards)

“Porque cuando le preguntan las palabras se me viene a la mente la imagen y la forma de escribirlo.” S2

(Question No. 2. Second questionnaire. Word cards and association with pictures)

“...Porque es la descripción de toda una historia.” S3

(Question No. 4. Second questionnaire. Comparing the three memory strategies)

“They are able to learn a good number of words easily and in a short time.”

(Research journal. August 24, 2011)

These findings together with those illustrated in Table 8 were relevant because the questionnaires showed that almost all participants, who had never been instructed on using word cards, association with pictures and association with a topic before in English vocabulary learning, found these strategies useful for the learning of the unknown vocabulary and in fact started to increase their number of words learned. The vocabulary tests indicated that most of the students' vocabulary scores improved progressively, illustrating that the students were increasing the number of memorized words after using the strategies by themselves.

Table 8

Indicates the Students' Answers to the Question of Having Ever Used each Strategy before, the Vocabulary test result in each Strategy, Including the Number of Words each Student Was Able to Recall from Fifteen Words for each Session and the Average Words Obtained by the Students.

| Had you ever tried to learn vocabulary by using _____ before this process started? Yes__ No__ | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------|---------------|-------|---------------------------|---------------|-----|--------------------------|---------------|-----|
| | Word cards | | | Association with pictures | | | Association with a topic | | |
| | Vocabulary test | | | Vocabulary test | | | Vocabulary test | | |
| | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 2 | | 1 | 2 | |
| | Ag. 29 | Sep. 7 | | Sep. 19 | Sep. 28 | | Oct. 24 | Oct. 31 | |
| S1 | no | 3 | 4 | No | 3 | 2 | yes | 1 | 3 |
| S2 | no | 8 | 15 | No | 9 | 14 | no | 6 | 8 |
| S3 | no | 10 | 15 | No | 8 | 10 | no | 6 | 8 |
| S4 | no | 6 | 9 | No | 4 | 13 | no | 6 | 8 |
| S5 | no | 7 | 15 | No | 9 | 15 | no | 5 | 5 |
| S6 | no | 6 | 14 | No | 10 | 11 | no | 3 | 8 |
| S7 | no | 7 | 15 | No | 11 | 15 | no | 13 | 9 |
| S8 | no | 8 | 15 | No | 3 | 3 | no | 1 | 9 |
| S9 | no | 7 | 15 | No | 9 | 8 | no | 0 | 8 |
| S10 | no | 1 | 14 | No | 8 | 11 | no | 1 | 5 |
| S11 | yes | 5 | 15 | Yes | 6 | 7 | yes | 3 | 8 |
| S12 | no | 7 | 11 | No | 4 | 3 | yes | 4 | 3 |
| Average words | | 6.25 | 13.08 | | 7 | 9.3 | | 4.08 | 6.8 |
| Average score | | 9.66 (64.43%) | | | 8.15 (54.33%) | | | 5.44 (36.27%) | |

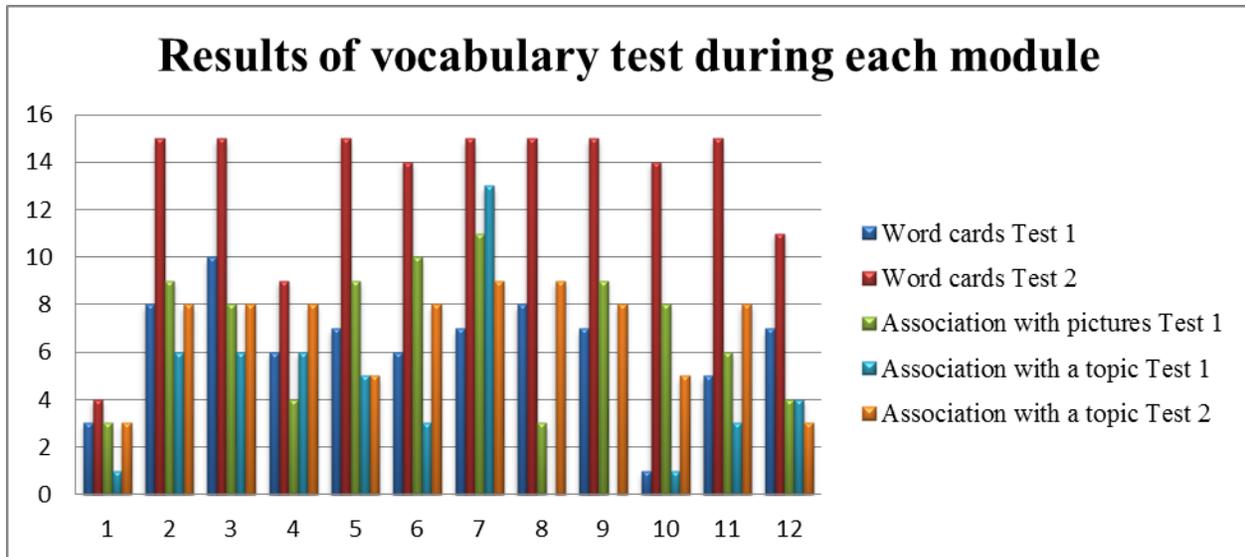


Figure 5. Increasing memorization of words. The figure illustrates the results of the two vocabulary tests applied to twelve participants during each module: word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic.

The information in the tests showed that almost all of these twelve participants benefited from using memory vocabulary strategies to learn vocabulary. Before beginning the study, the students used the dictionary as their main tool to find out the meaning of the words yet were unable to remember the vocabulary. However, after applying the memory strategies, each individual student began to increase the number of words that they were learning in each strategy. The results showed that when these low-level participants learned to use the strategies, they were progressively increasing the ability to remember and use words to convey meaning in a vocabulary test that measured if they were able to complete a sentence or short text taking into account the content of the fable the words were taken from, the illustrations, the initial letter of the word, or a set of words given (see Appendices F, G and H). Thus, based on the tests' results and the students' perceptions, it can be stated that vocabulary strategies are effective tools for the learning of words for this class.

*“antes no tenía idea de cómo mejorar mi vocabulario ni cómo poder memorizarlo.” S4
(Question No. 5. First questionnaire. Word cards)*

*“...me desempeño mejor en las actividades.” S8
(Question No. 5. First questionnaire. Association with pictures)*

*“..pues la estrategia ayuda porque al asociar las palabras, con recordar una se recuerda varias palabras...” S10
(Question No. 2. First questionnaire. Association with a topic)*

*“Learners are increasing the number of words. When reading, they are able to remember the words learnt in previous sessions.”
(Research journal. September 5, 2011)*

These findings showed that students' lack of vocabulary strategies can affect the students' language performance because learning vocabulary is a special part of mastering the foreign language they are learning (Schmitt, 2008). When learners started using the memory strategies, they started improving their capability to store words in the LTM. By increasing the frequency of encounters with the new vocabulary, the learners reported they were able to remember the words when they found them again in the readings; so that by improving their range of words, they were improving their reading comprehension at the same time even though this was not the focus of this study.

*“...entendemos lo que dice la lectura y aprendemos.” S3
(Question No. 4. First questionnaire. Word cards)*

*“...porque al aprender vocabulario entiendes la lectura y pues yo entendí la lectura.” S10
(Question No. 4. First questionnaire. Association with pictures)*

The students meet together in groups and share with peers their reading understanding aloud. One of the members of the group starts reading and translating her/his understanding in Spanish and the other members help him/her in this process. Most of them do not use the dictionary at this point. When they meet a word they had previously learnt they go over their material to remember the meaning to be sure about the correct meaning. However, I found that some of them are able to recall the words and remind their peers not only the meaning but also what reading had that word. When they are unable to identify the meaning of the words, they underline them. (Research journal. October 20, 2011. Association with a topic)

Although each of strategies enabled learners to acquire vocabulary, each strategy helped learners develop different learning skills. Word cards, which were more standardized tools, allowed students to rely on their first language to support their vocabulary learning (*Student 6: "...a mí se me olvidaba mucho el significado de las palabras, pero gracias a las fichas me acuerdo perfectamente de los significados"*). In contrast to word cards, association with pictures was a more personal strategy that allowed learners to use their imagination to make associations between their background knowledge of the meaning of the words –a concrete experience or a direct perception- and the way the learners used this information to illustrate the words. Association with a topic required the students to use their thinking skills to figure out the way they could represent in a word-map the mental word-connection they had built up among the words.

"...me ayudó a memorizar, pero no como lo hacía con las tarjetas..." S5
"...las imágenes me ayudan a recordar mejor." S8
 (Question No. 5. First questionnaire. Association with pictures)

"...las imágenes de uno, la de las demás no son tan entendibles." S11
 (Question No. 2. First questionnaire. Association with pictures)

"They anchored the meaning of words with pictures drawn by them but they had difficulties to identify the same meaning in other drawings. They asked the author of the cards in order to know if they could recognize well the meaning of the words"
 (Research journal. September 21, 2011)

"Porque es muy complicado y las palabras no se sacan aparte sino que deben estar en el mismo mapa." S6
 (Question No.2.First questionnaire. Association with a topic)

However, since the representation of the meaning of the words can be the result of a personal experience or a personal knowledge of the words, the participants of this study found it difficult to figure out the meaning of the words from other pictures different from their own. So,

as a way to illustrate the meaning of a word in a more standard way to avoid misunderstandings, they started interacting with their peers to share ideas about how to better represent the meaning of the words. This social behavior shows that learners were interested in cooperating with their peers and in learning from them. This interaction benefits the learning process because cooperative learning encourages interdependent and mutual support and increases confidence, enjoyment, achievement, and self-esteem (Oxford, 1990). Oxford (1990) also claimed that basic social interactions involve asking for clarifications and asking for corrections which “help learners to get closer to the intended meaning and thus aids their understanding. [These] conversations provide ... ‘input’ in the target language and indicate interest and involvement” (p. 145). Hence, the fact that these learners used this social strategy to approach a vocabulary strategy that was more cognitively demanding for them indicates that students were interested in overcoming their difficulties or lack of expertise through the mutual support of their classmates.

“Es confusa la imagen con la palabra.” S11

“Porque con sólo palabras ya es muy difícil el aprendizaje, en cambio con la otra me ayuda a memorizar mejor.” S12

(Question 3. Second type of questionnaire. Word cards and association with pictures)

“Since pictures can be a personal representation of the meaning of the words. Students can use a personal context, experience to represent them. When the meaning of words are presented in other way -not their personal way- they struggled to identify the meaning of the words”

(Research Journal. September 24, 2011. Association with pictures)

“Students have improved the way how to connect words based on the topic of the reading, nevertheless, they still working in groups to make sure they are connecting the words and recalling the meaning of words well. Students asked me for my approval of their word-map.”

(Research Journal. October 27, 2011. Association with a topic)

Association with a topic seemed to be a strategy that did not fit the students’ expectations and that demanded from them a different level of thinking skills. The participants indicated an

unwillingness to use the strategy in the future because they considered it difficult to apply and uninteresting.

“...no es que me llamara mucho la atención y no me motivaba a hacer los ejercicios” S2
(Question No. 2. First questionnaire. ¿Considera que esta estrategia le ayudó a la memorización/o recordación del nuevo vocabulario? Si/ No ¿Por qué? Association with a topic)

“No me pareció fácil y no pude recordar el vocabulario con esta estrategia tan aburrida.” S6
(Question No. 3. Second questionnaire. Association with pictures and association with a topic)

“Although students seemed interested in the association with a topic strategy when I explained it them, students seem unwilling to use it by themselves now. They started to complain of the strategy because they considered it more difficult to apply than the previous ones. So, they started to share with their partners their net-word-maps and discuss the possible connections of words with them.”
(Research journal. October 20, 2011)

The data showed that the students' preference for association with pictures depended on the fact that they considered this strategy easier to handle as well as more useful to learn the words than the other ones. Because the participants assigned meaning to the pictures, the task of drawing the meaning of the words engaged them for a long period of time as they figure out how to illustrate the words to make them memorable. Regarding this, researchers have highlighted the usefulness of pictures on memory: Words that are easily visualized have a stronger effect on memory than those that do not evoke any picture (Thornbury, 2004). Therefore, the more strongly the learners imagine and visualize a situation to represent the meaning of words, the more effectively it will be in the learners' mind for later recall. Since the image the learners use can be as vivid as they like, as long as it helps them to remember (Goll, 2004), they can develop their creativity and use their imagery to generate their own vivid illustration of the meaning of the words that, in this case, was based on their personal vocabulary experience or the content of the fables.

“Porque es muy fácil visualizar imágenes que palabras.” S2

“Porque con la asociación de imágenes se me reflejaban más en el vocabulario en cambio con la otra no.” S4

“Porque es más representativa las imágenes y puedes recordar las palabras.” S10
(Question No.2.Second questionnaire. Association with pictures and association with a topic)

“Porque creaba la imagen en mi cabeza de esa acción y me acordaba de las palabras tanto inglés como español.” S2

“Porque me sirvió mejor para la memorización.” S4

“Por su fácil manejo, por su fácil memorización y es muy efectiva.” S10
(Question No.2.Second questionnaire. Comparing the three vocabulary strategies)

In contrast, association with a topic demanded a higher level of association because they had to make appropriate connections between each word and its topic in order to be able to recall the meaning of the words more easily. This aspect demanded more concentration than the other two strategies. However, the last vocabulary test indicated that they were better able to recall new words with the strategy even though they thought it was more difficult and less interesting to use. The students wrote the following about the association with a topic strategy:

“Es más difícil de aprender así es mejor con las imágenes.” S1

(Question No. 5. First questionnaire. Association with a topic)

“Ya que la ubicación de las palabras en grupos es muy difícil y se memoriza menos.” S11

(Question No. 3. Second type of questionnaire. Comparing association with pictures with association with a topic)

“...Porque era difícil y aburrido.” S6

(Question No. 4. Second type of questionnaire: Comparing the three memory strategies)

The students seemed to think that the difficulty of the strategy itself was an indication that it was less effective for the memorization and recalling of words. Nevertheless, the students' scores in the final comprehensive vocabulary test showed that the participants had the best level of recall with the association with the topic strategy. In this regard, Hong (2009), in his study about the most frequently used and most useful vocabulary language learning strategy

among Chinese EFL postsecondary students in Hong Kong, also found that learners' perception about the strategy made them significantly useful for learning vocabulary and, the more learners use a strategy, the more useful they consider the strategy to be. Therefore, the students' perception about a strategy can be influenced by their personal experience with it, how comfortable they may feel using it, and how enjoyable this can be for them to learn English. These factors can become more important than a test result.

Table 9

Indicates the Scores for the Final Vocabulary Test, Including the Number of Words each Student Was Able to Recall from a Sample of Ten Words for each Strategy.

| <i>Strategies</i> | Final vocabulary test (comprehensive) | | | | | | | | | | | | <i>Average score</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----------------------|
| | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 | S5 | S6 | S7 | S8 | S9 | S10 | S11 | S12 | |
| <i>Word cards</i> | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 5.17 (51.7%) |
| <i>Association with pictures</i> | 6 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 5.83 (58.3%) |
| <i>Association with a topic</i> | 6 | 6 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 9 | 8 | 6.17 (61.7%) |

The scores of the final vocabulary tests illustrated in Table 9 (see also the final vocabulary test in Appendix E) showed that association with a topic was the most effective strategy for vocabulary retention eight days after being taught the last strategy. Retention here indicates they can remember the words. Using this strategy, the participants recalled a higher number of words than association with pictures or word cards. When the results were compared with the students' viewpoints, it was found that the students believed that association with pictures better helped them to remember the words than association with a topic, which was not

considered to be used the near future. Thus, it is possible to hypothesize that the preference for a strategy might depend on these students' perception of its effectiveness in terms of how familiar and comfortable they feel with it and their performance with the strategy and not just the scores obtained on the test. However, the average score registered for each strategy during its implementation (see Table 9) in comparison with the average score registered for each strategy at the final vocabulary test (see Table 10) showed that the "forgetting process occurs soon after the learning session" as Schmitt (2008, p. 343) stated. So, as the Schmitt also indicated there is a need to recycle these words to be re-met and used in other contexts and productive activities to enhance their learning (Schmitt, 2008) and ensure their acquisition.

Table 10

Comparing the three Memory Strategies. Effectiveness of the Strategies Based on Students' Viewpoint. Question 1. Second Type of Students' Questionnaire.

| In a range from 1 to 3, 1 being the most important and 3 the least, indicate the effectiveness of the strategies used in class to memorize and recall vocabulary. | Word Cards (WC) | Association with pictures (AP) | Association with a topic (AT) |
|---|----------------------------|---|--|
| 1. The most effective | 2 | 10 | |
| 2. Effective | 10 | 2 | |
| 3. Less effective | | | 12 |

(AP) "Porque fue muy efectiva y es muy fácil para poder memorizar" S4.

(AP) "Es más fácil de recordar las palabras" S6.

(AP) "Porque me gusta dibujar y si haciendo esto aprendo inglés se me resulta más fácil" S7.

(AP) "Porque es la mejor estrategia para mí" S8.

(AP) "Es el método más fácil de recordar y memorizar rápido las palabras" S9.

(AP) "Asociación con una imagen. Porque con ella en un futuro puedo guiarme para memorizar mucho más rápido todo" S12.

(Question 5. Second questionnaire. Comparing the three memory strategies)

Even though students preferred association with pictures, the information in Table 9 indicates that learners had better results with association with a topic. This discrepancy could have occurred because as the learners began to apply these strategies, they realized that each strategy offered them something different to support their vocabulary learning. The word card strategy allowed students to rely on their first language, association with pictures let them use their imagination and was slightly more difficult, but association with a topic required them to think about the content of the fable to figure out how to connect words so these could be remembered meaningfully. This could be why the students' scores decreased while they were moving from using word cards to association with pictures, and then to association with a topic as observed in Table 8.

AT: "Porque es la descripción de toda una historia." S3

AT: "Porque uno se confunde al leer todas las palabras relacionadas y difícil de memorizar."

S10

(Question No. 4. Second type of students' questionnaire. Comparing the three memory strategies)

AT: "Es difícil porque no puedo asociar las palabras con cada personaje y características." S6

(Question No. 4. First questionnaire. Association with a topic)

The fact that each strategy provides learners something they can use to support their vocabulary learning, learners started to incorporate some elements that they considered useful from one strategy into another one. For instance, some participants adapted the cards of word cards to association with pictures and created a set of words using pictures and words as "picture cards" (Figure 6). Other students preferred to represent the words through drawings in their notebooks based on their own knowledge and the experience of each word (Figure 7), the content of the fable (Figure 8), or an illustration of the fable (Figure 9) and other participants added the drawing to their semantic map which was the last strategy. Therefore, it is possible to determine that as soon as learners understand how to use a strategy, they start exploring different ways to

make the strategy more suitable to their learning preferences. This is a technique that good language learners use when they “have achieved a measure of autonomy and have developed their own techniques” (Thornbury, 2002, p. 145). This also highlights that these low-level learners are in the process of developing their own vocabulary strategies and becoming self-directed learners.



Figure 6. Adapted version of word cards.



Figure 7. Own illustration of the words

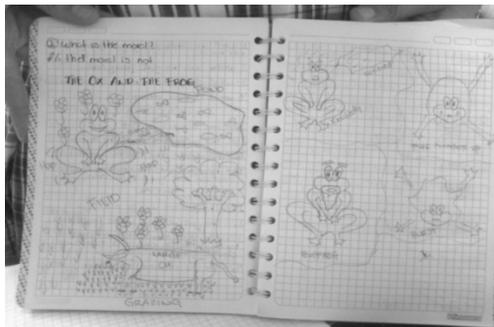


Figure 8. Pictures based on the content of the fable the ox and the frog.

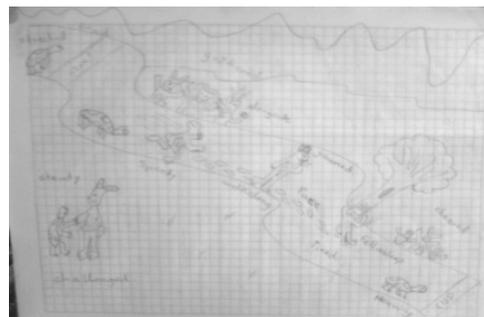


Figure 9. Illustration of the fable the tortoise and the hare.

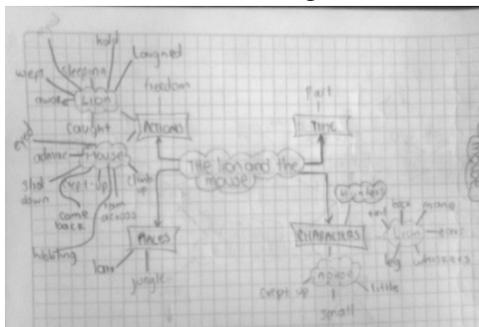


Figure 10. Association with a topic strategy.

In the process of learning how to use the strategies, low level proficiency teenagers learnt how to engage their memory to recall words and to develop their learning skills. Oxford (1990) stated that association with a topic is a strategy that “incorporates a variety of memory strategies like grouping, using imagery, associating and elaborating and it is important for improvement both memory and comprehension of the new vocabulary item” (p. 62). This information is aligned with what Brown and Perry (1991) found in their study about the use of keyword-semantics for vocabulary retention. They indicated that the keyword-semantic strategy combined with other strategies increases retention. In this case, based on the participants’ results, the more effort they made, the better the results at the end, and their preferences did not necessarily represent more effectiveness. Additionally, the fact that the strategies were learned from the easier to the more difficult might have better enabled the learners to combine some elements of each vocabulary strategy, develop their learning skills, and increase their ability to learn and recall words, so the combination of the vocabulary strategies seems more effective and meaningful for the students.

“Although students have improved the way how they connect words, they were still insecure about if this could help them to recall words because they did not have a Spanish translation or an image that could represent the words.”

(Research journal. October 24, 2011)

“Even though this should be a personal strategy, they still work in groups as a way to share ideas and make sure they are connecting well the words and recalling the meaning of words.”

(Research journal. October 27, 2011)

“Porque es muy complicado y las palabras no se sacan aparte sino que deben estar en el mismo mapa.” S6

(Question 2. First questionnaire. Association with a topic)

In conclusion, vocabulary strategies were perceived by learners with low language performance as didactic tools that enabled them to learn vocabulary. In this regard, the vocabulary tests proved that the use of vocabulary strategies gradually increased the number of words learnt by the participants. However, the preference of one strategy over another does not depend on a test result; the students' preferences may depend on whether the strategy is enjoyable and interesting and whether the strategy is easy to handle. Another important finding may be that when learners become familiar with these strategies, they are able to combine them to achieve a more meaningful vocabulary learning experience. Finally, vocabulary strategies involved a different kind of cognitive level that fostered learners to interact with their peers to overcome their difficulties illustrating or connecting the meaning of the words. This interaction indicated that these learners were in the process of taking the responsibility for their own learning and becoming more self-confident.

Chapter Six: Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications and Further Research

This chapter presents the most salient conclusions that emerged from this research study, the limitations encountered throughout its implementation, as well as some recommendations for further research.

Conclusions

The study was devoted to implementing three vocabulary strategies: words card, association with pictures, and association to inform us about the acquisition of vocabulary through fables in a group of teenage students with a low-level of English proficiency in a public school at El Espinal, Tolima-Colombia. The problem addressed was the lack of students' ability to learn and remember words. These strategies enabled the participants of this study to learn vocabulary and retrieve it. The data showed that although each participant registered a different range of words learned during the implementation of each strategy, all of them progressively expanded their range of words and developed their ability to recall and use them in a specific context in which they were tested. Their correct responses on the multiple choice and fill-in-the-gap items in the vocabulary tests indicated that the students were increasing their ability to remember the meaning of the words taken from the fables. However, the final vocabulary test also showed that the forgetting process begins after the learning sessions. To reduce the effect of forgetting process, it would be critical to quickly recycle the words learned and to use them in different contexts and activities; this recycling would reinforce their learning and enable the words move from conscious vocabulary learning to an unconscious vocabulary use that would indicate the words were acquired.

The findings also indicated that from students' perception vocabulary strategies can be seen as didactic tools when they become part of a self-instructional approach to learn vocabulary. This is especially important taking into account that almost all the participants reported that they had never been trained in word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic. This research suggested that both affective and cognitive factors may cause the participants of this study to prefer one strategy over another. In order for these learners to decide to use a vocabulary strategy, they needed to consider it an innovative, interesting, motivating, and fun tool as well as one that was easy to handle for the learning and the recalling of the words. However, the cognitive level of a strategy might affect their motivation and might cause them to believe that one strategy is more or less effective for vocabulary retention than another. In this study, the students judged association with a topic as a boring and difficult strategy. This why they indicated they would not choose to use it in the future even though they were better able to recall words using it.

The data indicated that these short fables chosen according to the students' interests allowed them to use their previous knowledge of the fables' content to illustrate the meaning of the words and to build significant connections among the words so these can be retrieved easily. The study also showed that after being acquainted with each strategy, the students customized it or used social strategies, which involved interaction to overcome their difficulties. Word cards fostered the learners' word recall by using their first language. Association with pictures moved learners from relying on the first language to using their imagination to visualize and represent accurately the meaning of the words. Association with a topic forced the learners to use their thinking skills to make mental connections among words and to build up a clear network of words. Hence, most of the learners adapted the word card strategy to a picture card strategy,

replacing words for pictures. All of the participants decided to interact with them by asking questions to clarify the meaning of the words and to share ideas with their peers to ensure an appropriate connection of words in the map. This demonstrates that these learners found the combination of the strategies more effective and that they started the process of being more independent learners and being more responsible for their own learning.

Limitations

Although the current study yielded useful results for the implementations of word cards, association with pictures and association with a topic, three limitations should be noted. First, the sample was limited to twelve low-level eleventh graders who attend a public high school, so it might not be possible to generalize the finding to other groups of EFL students. Further research might probe the effectiveness of these vocabulary strategies on the acquisition of vocabulary in other groups of EFL students in public school conditions. Second, the time frame of this study was restricted to ten weeks; nevertheless, the implementation was prolonged three weeks because of scheduled meetings and school activities for participants' graduation. This affected the scheduling of the final vocabulary test to a week after the last strategy had been applied. The students should be tested after a period of time to determine whether they have truly acquired the vocabulary. This would measure to what extent the vocabulary was learned and retained over time. Although the students were able to use the vocabulary learned to complete the sentences on the vocabulary test based on the clues given (the initial letter of the words, pictures or words), this does not mean that they acquired the words and would be able to use them after a prolonged period of time. Additionally, the target vocabulary was used in limited contexts, and the students could be required to use these words in more contexts in order

to ensure their acquisition. Further studies could prolong the time lapse between the last strategy implementation and the vocabulary tests possibly producing different scores on an evaluation. Third, the research was restricted to study three memory strategies for intentional vocabulary learning with a group with low-level of English proficiency; therefore, it might not be possible to generalize the findings to all kinds of vocabulary strategies. Fourth, the focus of this study was to inform the community about the acquisition of vocabulary by using three memory strategies for vocabulary learning, not by using vocabulary strategies for reading comprehension. Hence, although this study used fables as the texts from which students could choose the words they would like to learn, the effect of vocabulary strategies on reading comprehension was not intended to be tested. Further studies in the effect of memory strategies on reading comprehension could indicate how memory strategies could contribute to reading comprehension of fables or other kinds of material. Finally, also regarding the materials, because the students wanted to learn vocabulary from tales, one of the limitations was to find short versions with a range of two hundred words that did not exceed the students' language level and that gave the learners the chance of meeting and re-meeting the same words. These were found on a children's website. This material was appropriate for these students in this context, but there is a need to explore these strategies with other texts that would offer learners specific contextual vocabulary.

Pedagogical Implications

A number of pedagogical implications need to be taken into account when applying vocabulary strategies with students with a low-level of English proficiency. This requires that teachers think about some issues related to the materials, the strategy itself and the feedback.

First, the teachers should carefully select the materials they are going to use based on the students' ages, language levels, and interests in order to engage learners in the process. The number of words in a text should not greatly exceed the students' understanding in order for learners to have a sense of improvement while they are reading the texts so they can focus on the words they want to learn. The materials also should give learners the chance to meet and re-meet words to ensure their learning. Second, the teachers should train learners in how to use vocabulary strategies for specific learning purposes. The teachers need to model and explain the strategies to the learners and then provide learners with opportunities to practice them in class. In this way, the teachers can guide the students' learning process and know what difficulties they are facing in the application of the strategies. Third, it is important to evaluate the outcomes of the vocabulary strategy because "[t]esting provides a form of feedback, both for learners and teachers" (Thornbury, 2004, 129). As a result, the teachers can know whether or not the strategies are helping the students to increase their vocabulary and what strategies better fit their students' learning styles. Finally, the teachers need to be aware that the more strategies students learn to use effectively, the better development they will have in the language process since these can enable them to apply, adapt, or combine the vocabulary strategies to their learning preferences, take responsibility for their learning process, and be more independent learners.

The general curriculum and the English classes of the schools need to incorporate vocabulary strategies as a way to provide opportunities for the learners to select or combine them to overcome their difficulties of learning and recalling words. This will enable learners not only to be familiar with the vocabulary strategies and use them but also to interact and build confidence, which is an important step towards learners' autonomy. Since words are important to convey meaning, educators can introduce vocabulary strategies in their writing, speaking,

reading, and listening lessons so the learners start expanding their range of words, enhance their learning, enriching their learning skills, and developing their language skills. Because the SABER exam and the mocks tests had registered a low language level among the eleventh graders of this public school, the implementation of these and other vocabulary strategies in all English classes could help students improve their ability to memorize, store, recall and use words, thus acquiring vocabulary that they could recycle, use and develop as they advance in their English study. If the teachers structured their classes around the language skills and instructed the learners in how to learn vocabulary, the students would be familiar with these strategies and practice them to increase their vocabulary learning. This is an initial step that could benefit the learners and that could contribute to improve the current situation of the students of this school.

Further research

Some suggestions for further research are made based on the limitations of this study. First, since this study was conducted with a group of low level proficiency 11th graders at a public school setting, further research may: (a) use the methodology of this research in similar learning conditions with a bigger sample of participants for further discussion so the study can compare and prove the effectiveness of word cards, association with pictures, and association with a topic on vocabulary learning; (b) adapt the present methodology in primary grades when students are experimenting with the language and need to enrich their vocabulary or at university level where it is expected that students have a range of words that facilitate their language skills, this could yield additional insights about their effect on vocabulary learning and on the development of language skills; and (c) test vocabulary through reading so the study can measure

the usefulness of the vocabulary strategies not only in the acquisition of vocabulary but also in the reading understanding of the texts chosen to be used in class.

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Footnotes

¹SABER exam is a standardized exam applied by the Colombian government to Colombian 11th graders to measure their level of competence in basic areas of knowledge. Colombian universities require this exam from those who want to apply to their undergraduate degree programs.

²PEI is the Educational Project designed by each Educative Institution (EI) in Colombia. This Institutional Education Project is an official document which is the result of an agreement among students, teachers, the staff of the institution, and the students' parents in particular regard to the Institution's principles and goals, its human and didactic resources, the pedagogic strategy, the students' and teachers' regulations, and the quality of the educational system.

³In-service Certificate in English Language Teaching ICELT is a teacher training course that encourages English teachers in various contexts to deepen their knowledge about language and to develop their teaching abilities by reflection on their teaching practice. The main aims of this course are to develop the teachers' skills in (1) language awareness and language use in the classroom, (2) planning, teaching, and evaluation, and (3) assessment and evaluation.

Appendix A

First Type of Students' Questionnaire: Word Cards

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas.

1. Antes de este proceso, ¿había tratado alguna vez de aprender vocabulario usando tarjetas de palabras? Si ____ No ____

2. Finalizado este proceso de usar tarjetas de palabras para aprender vocabulario, ¿Considera que esta estrategia le ayudó a la memorización y/o recordación del nuevo vocabulario?

Si ____ No ____ ¿Por qué?

3. ¿Cómo evalúa esta estrategia?

- a. Muy efectiva para aprender vocabulario
- b. Efectiva para aprender vocabulario
- c. No hubo ningún cambio
- d. Poco efectiva para aprender vocabulario
- e. Sin ninguna efectividad para aprender vocabulario.

¿Por qué? _____

4. ¿Esta estrategia me sirvió para aprender el vocabulario de la lectura?

Si ____ No ____ ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Considera que su nivel de recordación de vocabulario mejoró usando esta estrategia?

Si ____ No ____ ¿Por qué?

Gracias.

Note: This questionnaire was given to the students in their first language due to their low English proficiency level.

First Type of Students' Questionnaire: Association with Pictures

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas.

1. Antes de este proceso, ¿había tratado alguna vez de aprender vocabulario asociándolo con imágenes? Si_____ No_____

2. Finalizado este proceso de asociación de vocabulario con imágenes, ¿Considera que esta estrategia le ayudó a la memorización y/o recordación del nuevo vocabulario?
Si_____ No_____ ¿Por qué?

3. ¿Cómo evalúa esta estrategia?
a. Muy efectiva para aprender vocabulario
b. Efectiva para aprender vocabulario
c. No hubo ningún cambio
d. Poco efectiva para aprender vocabulario
e. Sin ninguna efectividad para aprender vocabulario.
¿Por qué?

4. ¿Esta estrategia me sirvió para aprender el vocabulario de la lectura?
Si_____ No_____ ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Considera que su nivel de recordación de vocabulario mejoró usando esta estrategia?
Si_____ No _____ ¿Por qué?

Gracias.

Note: This questionnaire was given to the students in their first language due to their low English proficiency level.

First Type of Students' Questionnaire: Association with a Topic

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas.

1. Antes de este proceso, ¿había tratado alguna vez de aprender vocabulario asociándolo con un tema? Si_____ No_____

2. Finalizado este proceso de asociación de vocabulario con un tema, ¿Considera que esta estrategia le ayudó a la memorización y/o recordación del nuevo vocabulario?
Si_____ No_____ ¿Por qué?

3. ¿Cómo evalúa esta estrategia?
a. Muy efectiva para aprender vocabulario
b. Efectiva para aprender vocabulario
c. No hubo ningún cambio
d. Poco efectiva para aprender vocabulario
e. Sin ninguna efectividad para aprender vocabulario.
¿Por qué?

4. ¿Esta estrategia me sirvió para aprender el vocabulario de la lectura?
Si_____ No_____ ¿Por qué?

5. ¿Considera que su nivel de recordación de vocabulario mejoró usando esta estrategia?
Si_____ No _____ ¿Por qué?

Gracias.

Note: This questionnaire was given to the students in their first language due to their low English proficiency level.

Appendix B

Second Type of Students' Questionnaire (Comparing Word Cards and Association with Pictures)

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas.

1. indique con una (X) cual estrategia considera hasta ahora más efectiva para la memorización y recordación de vocabulario.
____ Tarjetas con palabras
____ Asociación con imágenes.

2. Con base en su respuesta anterior, indique porqué la estrategia que usted seleccionó fue más efectiva para la memorización y recordación de vocabulario.

3. Con base en su respuesta a la primera pregunta, ¿por qué la estrategia que usted no seleccionó, fue menos efectiva?

4. ¿Cuál estrategia le resultó más difícil de aplicar? _____
¿Por qué?

5. ¿Cuál estrategia considera podría seguir usando en el futuro para la memorización de nuevo vocabulario? _____
¿Por qué?

Gracias.

Note: This questionnaire was given to the students in their first language due to their low English proficiency level.

Second Type of Students' Questionnaire (Comparing Association with Pictures with Association with a Topic)

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas.

1. Indique con una X cual estrategia considera más efectiva para la memorización y recordación de vocabulario.

____ Asociación con imágenes.

____ Asociación con un tema o historia

2. Con base en su respuesta anterior, ¿por qué la estrategia que usted seleccionó fue más efectiva para la memorización y recordación de vocabulario?

3. Con base en su respuesta a la primera pregunta, ¿por qué la estrategia que usted no seleccionó, fue menos efectiva?

4. ¿Cuál estrategia le resultó más difícil de aplicar? _____
¿Por qué?

5. ¿Cuál estrategia considera podría seguir usando en el futuro para la memorización de nuevo vocabulario? _____

¿Por qué?

Gracias.

Note: This questionnaire was given to the students in their first language due to their low English proficiency level.

Second Type of Students' Questionnaire (Comparing the Three Memory Strategies)

Por favor responda las siguientes preguntas.

1. En una escala de 1 a 3, siendo 1 la de mayor importancia y 3 la de menos, indique la efectividad de las estrategias usadas en clase para la memorización y recordación de vocabulario.
____ Asociación con una imagen.
____ Asociación con un tema.
____ Tarjetas con palabras

2. Con base en su respuesta anterior, indique porqué la estrategia que usted seleccionó como más importante, fue más efectiva que las demás.

3. Con base en su respuesta a la primera pregunta, ¿por qué la estrategia que usted seleccionó como menos importante, fue menos efectiva que las demás.

4. ¿Cuál estrategia le resultó más difícil de aplicar? _____
¿Por qué? _____

5. ¿Cuál estrategia considera le ayudó más memorizar y recordar palabras nuevas?

¿Por qué? _____

6. ¿Cuál estrategia considera podría seguir usando en el futuro para la memorización de nuevo vocabulario? _____
¿Por qué? _____

Gracias.

Note: This questionnaire was given to the students in their first language due to their low English proficiency level.

Appendix C

Researcher's Journal

Date: _____

1. Strategy: _____ What went well with the strategy? Why?
- a. Learners applied the strategy correctly.
 - b. Learners were able to memorize words
 - c. Learners were able to recall a high number of new words
 - d. Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What went poorly with the strategy?
- a. Learners struggled to apply the strategy
 - b. Learners were not able to memorize all words
 - c. Learners were not able to recall a high number of new words
 - d. Other _____
- _____
- _____

3. What surprised me?
- _____
- _____
- _____

4. What changes should be done?
- _____
- _____
- _____

5. What strategy (**word cards, association with a picture, association with a topic or story**)
- a. has been high effective to learn vocabulary.
 - b. has been little effective to learn vocabulary
 - c. has been less effective to learn vocabulary.
 - d. has not been effective to learn vocabulary.
- Why?
- _____
- _____
- _____

Appendix D

Consent Letters. Principal's Consent Letter

Espinal, _____ de 2011

Señor

Rector Institución Educativa _____
Espinal

Apreciado Rector

Durante el tiempo que he estado enseñando inglés en el grado 11 he podido evidenciar la necesidad de trabajar con estrategias que les permitan a los estudiantes adquirir y recordar vocabulario, lo cual es básico para el desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas en inglés y el buen desempeño de los estudiantes en este idioma.

Por lo anterior es de mi interés desarrollar un proyecto de investigación titulado “La adquisición de vocabulario a través las estrategias de memorización: asociación de imágenes, temas y palabras” en esta institución con el grado 11, de manera que me permita aportar desde mi área a la adquisición y recordación de vocabulario por parte de los estudiantes y de esta manera enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y la práctica docente.

De manera que mediante solicito su consentimiento y colaboración para realizar mi propuesta de investigación durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año escolar, la cual se llevará a cabo bajo la asesoría del programa de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en ambientes autónomos de aprendizaje (Master in English language teaching – Autonomous learning environment). Este proyecto implica la recolección de datos a través de cuestionario y notas sobre las observaciones de los talleres en donde se explicarán y aplicarán las estrategias, así como se hará su posterior análisis. Por ello, me gustaría contar con su autorización para hacer uso de esta información con parte de mi proyecto de grado.

Igualmente, a los estudiantes se les garantizará la estricta confidencialidad en el uso de la información y su no incidencia en la nota de su asignatura. Esta información estará a su disposición cuando lo estime conveniente.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Cordialmente,

Docente TPC área de Español e Inglés

Nombre: _____

Autorizo: Si _____ No _____ Firma: _____

Parents' Consent Letter

Espinal, _____ de 2011

Señor(a)

Institución Educativa _____
Espinal

Apreciado padre de familia,

Durante el tiempo que he estado enseñando inglés en el grado 11 he podido evidenciar la necesidad de trabajar con estrategias que les permitan a los estudiantes adquirir y recordar vocabulario, lo cual es básico para el desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas en inglés y el buen desempeño de los estudiantes en este idioma.

Por lo anterior es de mi interés desarrollar un proyecto de investigación titulado “La adquisición de vocabulario a través las estrategias de memorización: asociación de imágenes, temas y palabras” en esta institución con el grado 11, de manera que me permita aportar desde mi área a la adquisición y recordación de vocabulario por parte de los estudiantes y de esta manera enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y la práctica docente.

De manera que comediante solicito su consentimiento y colaboración para realizar mi propuesta de investigación durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año escolar, la cual se llevará a cabo bajo la asesoría del programa de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en ambientes autónomos de aprendizaje (Master in English language teaching – Autonomous learning environment). Este proyecto implica la recolección de datos a través de cuestionario y notas sobre las observaciones de los talleres en donde se explicarán y aplicarán las estrategias, así como se hará su posterior análisis. Por ello, me gustaría contar con su autorización para hacer uso de esta información con parte de mi proyecto de grado.

Igualmente, a los estudiantes se les garantizará la estricta confidencialidad en el uso de la información y su no incidencia en la nota de su asignatura. Esta información estará a su disposición cuando lo estime conveniente.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Cordialmente,

Docente TPC área de Español e Inglés

.....
Nombre: _____

Autorizo: Si _____ No _____ Firma: _____

Student's Consent Letter

Espinal, _____ de 2011

Alumno(a)

Institución Educativa _____
Espinal

Apreciado Estudiante

Durante el tiempo que he estado enseñando inglés en el grado 11 he podido evidenciar la necesidad de trabajar con estrategias que les permitan a los estudiantes adquirir y recordar vocabulario, lo cual es básico para el desarrollo de las habilidades comunicativas en inglés y el buen desempeño de los estudiantes en este idioma.

Por lo anterior es de mi interés desarrollar un proyecto de investigación titulado “La adquisición de vocabulario a través las estrategias de memorización: asociación de imágenes, temas y palabras” en esta institución con el grado 11, de manera que me permita aportar desde mi área a la adquisición y recordación de vocabulario por parte de los estudiantes y de esta manera enriquecer los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua extranjera y la práctica docente.

De manera que comediante solicito su consentimiento y colaboración para realizar mi propuesta de investigación durante el segundo semestre académico del presente año escolar, la cual se llevará a cabo bajo la asesoría del programa de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con Énfasis en ambientes autónomos de aprendizaje (Master in English language teaching – Autonomous learning environment). Este proyecto implica la recolección de datos a través de cuestionario y notas sobre las observaciones de los talleres en donde se explicarán y aplicarán las estrategias, así como se hará su posterior análisis. Por ello, me gustaría contar con su autorización para hacer uso de esta información con parte de mi proyecto de grado.

Igualmente, a los estudiantes se les garantizará la estricta confidencialidad en el uso de la información y su no incidencia en la nota de su asignatura. Esta información estará a su disposición cuando lo estime conveniente.

Agradezco de antemano su autorización para llevar a buen término mi investigación.

Cordialmente,

Docente TPC área de Español e Inglés

.....
Nombre: _____

Autorizo: Si _____ No _____ Firma: _____

Appendix E

Final Vocabulary Tests

Name: _____ Grade 11 _____ Date _____

Explain the meaning of words by selecting one of the strategies.

| | |
|------------|-----------|
| Admired | Skinned |
| Alongside | Small |
| Asked | Sour |
| Ate up | Speedy |
| Breath | Spoil |
| Cave | Stag |
| Climb | Surprised |
| Cut | Sweetness |
| Eyed | Toes |
| Fell sleep | |
| Footprints | |
| Hatch | |
| Hunt | |
| Insult | |
| Jungle | |
| Lay eggs | |
| Look at | |
| Pout | |
| Ran down | |
| Roar | |
| Sick | |

Appendix F

Word Card Test

Name _____ Grade 11 _____ Date _____

Choose the right word to go with each meaning. Write the number of that word next to its meaning.

- | | | |
|---------------|-------|-------------|
| | _____ | Preguntó |
| | _____ | Respondió |
| 1. Breath | _____ | Dulsura |
| 2. Asked | _____ | Aliento |
| 3. Ate up | _____ | Resfriado |
| 4. Ferocious | _____ | Rey |
| 5. Sour | _____ | Furioso |
| 6. Tactful | _____ | Devoró |
| 7. Roared | _____ | Ambos |
| 8. Awoke | _____ | Amargo |
| 9. Happened | _____ | Sucedió |
| 10. Replied | _____ | Agradable |
| 11. Insult | _____ | Rugió |
| 12. Cold | _____ | Despertó |
| 13. Both | _____ | Insultar |
| 14. Must | _____ | Jackal |
| 15. Sweetness | _____ | Deber/Tener |
| | _____ | Conejo |
| | _____ | Antilope |

Word Vocabulary Test

Name: _____ Grade 11 _____ Date _____

The Girl and Her Bucket

Complete the underline words as in the following example.

He was speaking by ph_____.

He was speaking by phone.

1. This hen will la_____.
2. Then, the hen will ha_____ many chicks.
3. The girl hopes her hen can ra_____ many chicks.
4. When the chicks gr_____, the girl will see her dreams come true.
5. Per_____ the girl will wear fine clothes and visit the Queen.
6. When she visits the Queen, she will br_____ some gifts with her.
7. And she will wear emeralds and rubies from her head to her to_____.

If you remember some other new words, please write them below.

Appendix G

Association with Picture Test

Name _____ Date _____ Grade _____

Look at the picture and write the missing word.

Visiting The Lion's  _____

There once was a lion who was too lazy to _____ for his food.

He  p_____ to be very  _____ and

 a _____ to all the animals that he was soon to  _____.

"Please," he said, "come visit me in my cave and bid me goodbye."

The lion  _____ so  _____ and  _____,

the animals felt sorry for him. One by one  the _____ came. One by one, the lion ate his fill of them! When fox arrived to pay his last respects, he stopped in front of the

cave's entrance and  _____ at the  _____

"Come in  _____, I am dying!" cried the sly lion, impatiently.

"No," said the fox, who was equally clever, "You'll not have ME for a visitor, though you moan



and _____ . While I see many  _____ going into your cave, NONE are coming out!"

Name _____ Date _____ Grade _____

Look at the picture and write the missing word.

1. Carlos  _____ a noise in the street.

2. My father  _____ while he was watching TV because he was  _____

3. David  _____ Goliath to a fight.

4. Pedro always  _____ and _____ before going to bed.

5. This is the  _____ to go to my house.

6. The boy  _____ in the forest.



7. The soldier is _____.



8. Rodrigo _____ his birthday's gift.



9. Gonzalez is a _____ mouse, but the tortoise _____ slowly.



10. Mr. Ramirez _____ his family.



11. The boy _____ the mountain in his bike.



12. The people is _____ the main road.

Appendix H

Association with a Topic Test

Name: _____ Grade 11 _____ Date _____

Read the following text and use the words given in capital letters to fill in the gaps. There is one example at the beginning of beginning (0).

| The Lion and the Mouse | |
|--|------------|
| There was once a (0) <u>small</u> mouse that (1) _____ to | small |
| sleeping Lion. The mouse (2) _____ the Lion's ears, whiskers | hunters |
| and mane. | lair |
| Then, the mouse (3) _____ onto the Lion's tail, | jungle |
| (4) _____ its back and (5) _____ its leg. | wept |
| But the Lion awoke and (6) _____ the mouse. | laughed |
| The Mouse said the Lion "Let me go and I'll come back and help you | hold |
| someday." The Lion (7) _____ so hard that | caught |
| he had to (8) _____ the mouse. The next day, two | eyed |
| (9) _____ came to (10) _____ . | climbed |
| They went to the Lions' (11) _____ and trapped him. | admired |
| The Lion roared and (12) _____ but he could not escape. | ran across |
| The mouse heard the Lion and (13) _____ to help him. | crept up |
| The mouse (14) _____ the trap and began (15) _____ | slid down |
| the rope. Finally, the Lion was free and thanked the Mouse's help. | came back |
| | nibbling |

Appendix I Research Project Timeline

| Activity/Date | February, March, April, May and June | | | | Month July | | | | Month August | | | | | Month September | | | | Month October | | | | Month November | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|------------|-----|-----|----|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------------|----|-----|----|---------------|----|----|-----|----------------|----|----|----|
| | W 1 | W 2 | W 3 | W4 | W 1 | W 2 | W 3 | W4 | W 1 | W 2 | W 3 | W 4 | W 5 | W1 | W2 | W 3 | W4 | W 1 | W2 | W3 | W 4 | W1 | W2 | W3 | W4 |
| Step 1: Chapter 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 2: Designing the action plan. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 3: Literature review | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 4: Research design | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 5: Planning | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 6: First design of the instruments | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 7: Pilot the instruments | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 7: Intervention | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 8: monitoring data collection | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 9: Analysis of data collection | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 10: Reflection & decision making | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Step 11: Sharing findings | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Appendix J

Timeline of Data Collection and Implementation

| Stage | Month | Week (Dates) | Activity | Data Collection Instrument(s) |
|----------------------|--------------------|---|---|---|
| Pre-stage | August | August 1-2 Consent Letters | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Asking learners if they are interested in taking part of the research study. Getting students', parents' and principal's consent letters. | |
| While - stage | August – September | August 3- 22 Applying the first memory strategy: Word cards | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Training learners in the use of word cars. Repeating the strategy 3 times to provide more opportunities to use it. Measuring the level of vocabulary retention from the students through activities where they have to use the vocabulary learnt with this strategy. | <p>Vocabulary tests.</p> <p>Researcher's journal</p> |
| | | August 23 – September 2 Analyzing and validating collected data by the instruments applied in the first strategy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Applying a questionnaire related to word cards strategy. Identifying the effectiveness of the strategy on the vocabulary acquisition. Identifying possible changes to take into account in the implementation of the strategy. | <p>Questionnaire about the usefulness of word cards on memory retention</p> <p>Researcher's journal</p> |
| | | August 23 – September 16 Applying the second memory strategy: Association with pictures | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Training learners in the association of words with pictures memory strategy. Repeating the strategy 3 times to provide more opportunities to use it. Measuring the level of vocabulary retention from the students through activities where they have to use the vocabulary learnt. | <p>Vocabulary tests.</p> <p>Researcher's journal</p> |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|--|--|--|
| While-stage | September-October | September 17 – September 25 Analyzing and validating collected data by the instruments applied in the second strategy. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applying the first questionnaire related to the association of words with a picture strategy. 2. Identifying the effectiveness of the strategy on the vocabulary acquisition. 3. Identifying possible changes to take into account in the implementation of the strategy. 4. Applying a questionnaire where students compare the effectiveness of the first and second strategy from their point of view. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire about the usefulness of association with a picture memory strategy • Questionnaire where students compare word card with association with pictures. <p style="text-align: center;">Researcher’s journal</p> |
| | | September 19 – October 10 Applying the last memory strategy: Association words with a topic or story. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Training learners in the association of words with a topic or story. 2. Repeating the strategy 3 times to provide more opportunities to use it. 3. Measuring the level of vocabulary retention from the students through activities where they have to use the vocabulary learnt. | <p>Vocabulary tests.</p> <p>Researcher’s journal</p> |
| | | October 11- 17 Applying the last questionnaire for the association with a topic or story and the final questionnaires. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applying the questionnaire related to the association of words with a topic or story. 2. Applying a questionnaire where students measure and compare the effectiveness of the second and third strategy from their point of view. 3. Applying the final questionnaire where students measure and compare the effectiveness of the strategies in general from their point of view. 4. Identifying the effectiveness of the strategies on the vocabulary acquisition. 5. Identifying possible changes to take into account in the implementation of the strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaire about the usefulness of association words with a topic or story. • Questionnaire where students compare association with pictures with association with a topic. • Questionnaire where students compare the three memory strategies. • Vocabulary final test. <p style="text-align: center;">Researcher’s journal</p> |
| Post-stage | | October 18- November 11 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analyzing the data collection and making conclusion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questionnaires about the usefulness of the memory strategies. • Vocabulary tests. • Researcher’s journal |

Appendix K
Methodology of the Lesson Plan

| Stage | Aim | Procedure | | | Time and interaction |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|---|--|----------------------|
| | | Teacher and student activity | | | |
| | | Word cards | Association with a picture | Association with a story | |
| Presentation of the strategy | Training learners on the strategy | <p>Teacher explained the word cards technique.</p> <p>Step 1: Learners made the small cards about 4cm. by 2cm.</p> <p>Step 2: Learners wrote a word on one side and its translation into their first language.</p> <p>Step 3: Learners tried to recall what was written on each card by checking in pairs.</p> <p>Step 4: Words that were easy to recall were placed on the bottom of the pack. Words that caused difficulty were moved to the top of the pack so that they could be looked at again soon.</p> <p>Step 5: After going through the pack once or twice, it was put away, ready to be reviewed in about half an hour. Nevertheless, the cards had to be shuffled.</p> | <p>Teacher explained the association with a picture technique.</p> <p>Step 1: Students thought of an image that could represent the meaning of the word.</p> <p>Step 2: Pairs of students checked the meaning of the words using their picture charts and books.</p> <p>Step 3: Pairs of students checked the vocabulary at increasingly spaced intervals of time.</p> | <p>Teacher explained the association with a story technique.</p> <p>Step 1: Students built an association network centered on the topic of the reading.</p> <p>Step 2: Students connected other associated words to the network.</p> <p>Step 3: Students compared their association network of words with a classmate to extend the information.</p> <p>Step 4: Students read the story again and adjusted the information of their association network of words.</p> <p>Step 5: Learners tried to recall the words by checking in pairs.</p> | T- Ss 10 minutes |

| Stage | Aim | Procedure Teacher and student activity | | | Time and interaction |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|---|----------------------------------|
| | | Word cards | Association with a picture | Association with a story | |
| Presentation of the strategy | Training learners on the strategy | <p>periodically to avoid “serial effects,” that was remembering words because of the order they came in and not for any other reason.</p> <p>Step 6: The cards in the pack were checked again at increasingly spaced intervals of time.</p> <p>Step 7: As words were learned they had to be discarded and new words cards made and added to the set.</p> <p>Based on Nation (2008) and Thornbury (2004).</p> | | | |
| Using the strategy | Controlled practice: Memorizing words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners applied the first four steps of the strategy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners applied the first two steps of the strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners applied the first two steps of the strategy | IW 10 minutes T-monitoring |
| | Semi-controlled practice: Recalling words. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After 15 minutes, learners tried to recall what was written on each card by testing in pairs. Additionally, learners applied the step 5 of the strategy to avoid “serial effect”. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After 15 minutes, learners tried to recall what was drawn on cards by testing in pairs. Additionally, learners shuffled the cards periodically to avoid “serial effects”. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students applied the last three steps of the strategy. After 15 and 30 minutes, learners tried to recall the associated words by testing in pairs. | PW 10 minutes T-monitoring |

| Stage | Aim | Procedure Teacher and student activity | | | Time and interaction |
|----------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| | | Word cards | Association with a picture | Association with a story | |
| Using the strategy | Semi-controlled practice: Recalling words. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After 30 minutes, learners tried again to recall the words by testing in pairs. The cards in the pack were checked at increasingly spaced intervals of time. The words were reviewed again in pairs at the beginning of next class. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> After 30 minutes, learners tried to recall the words again by testing in pairs. The cards in the pack were looked at increasingly spaced intervals of time. The words were checked again in pairs at the beginning of the next lesson. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Words were reviewed again in pairs at the beginning of the second-hour class | |
| Testing the strategy | Testing the memorization of words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students matched English words to their corresponding Spanish meaning. Teacher gave each student a modified copy of the story. The students filled in blanks by choosing the appropriate words from a word bank. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students matched the words to their corresponding pictures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students matched English words to their corresponding meaning. | PW 10 minutes T. monitoring |
| Follow up | Collecting data from students. | Each student completed a questionnaire about each one of the strategies. | | | Individual 10 minutes |

Appendix L

Nine Short Readings: Fables

The Fox and the Crow

The Girl and Her Bucket

Insulting the King

The Ox and the Frog

Visiting the Lion's Cave

The Tortoise and the Hare

The Boy Who Cried Wolf

The Lion and the Mouse

The previous fables were taken from <http://www.storyarts.org/library/aesops/>

Aesop's Fables: The Lion's Share

This fable was taken form <http://www.saberingles.com.ar/stories/04.html>

Appendix M

Open Coding Sample

| FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE: WORD CARDS | | VOCABULARY TESTS | |
|---------------------------------|--|--|-------|
| | | 1 | 2 |
| 1. | Antes de este proceso, ¿había tratado alguna vez de aprender vocabulario usando tarjetas de palabras? Si____ No____ | Ag. 29 | Sep.7 |
| | No.1 no | 3 | 4 |
| | No. 2 no | 8 | 15 |
| | No. 3 no | 10 | 15 |
| | No. 4 no | 6 | 9 |
| | No. 5 no | 7 | 15 |
| | No. 6 no | 6 | 14 |
| | No. 7 no | 7 | 15 |
| | No. 8 no | 8 | 15 |
| | No. 9 no | 7 | 15 |
| | No. 10 no | 1 | 14 |
| | No. 11si | 5 | 15 |
| | No. 12 no | 7 | 11 |
| 2. | Finalizado este proceso de usar tarjetas de palabras, ¿considera que esta estrategia le ayudó a la memorización/o recordación del nuevo vocabulario? Si____ No____ ¿Por qué? | | |
| | No. 1: si, porque por medio de esto podemos recordar con mayor facilidad | They recall vocabulary easily | |
| | No. 2: si, es una forma interesante y entretenida para aprender | Interesting and motivating and fun | |
| | No. 3: si, porque es una manera didáctica de memorizar y mejorar nuestro vocabulario de ingles | Didactic tool to memorize words/ Improvement | |
| | No. 4: si, porque sin ello no me sería fácil memorizar este tipo de vocabulario | They recall vocabulary easily | |
| | No. 5: si, porque nos ayuda a interactuar, lo cual nos anima a seguir con el proceso | Motivating | |
| | No. 6: si, porque el estudiante se aprende más rápido las palabras e interactuamos al mismo tiempo | Learn fast | |
| | | Interaction | |
| | No. 7.: si, porque las tarjetas ayudan a la memorización tanto en español como en ingles | Helpto memorize | |

| | |
|--|--|
| No. 8: si, porque tenía una guía y las tarjetas me ayudaban a saber cómo se escribía y que significaba | Meaning (Reading) and spelling (Writing) |
| No. 9. si, porque me acuerdo de las palabras y a interactuar | They recall vocabulary easily |
| No. 10. si, ya que por medio de las tarjetas el vocabulario es fácil de aprender | Learning easily |
| No. 11. si, se aprende más fácil el vocabulario y se estimula mejor el estudiante | Motivating |
| No. 12. si, porque así se me facilita más el aprendizaje de las palabras | Learn easily |

JOURNAL: WORD CARDS Date: August 24th, 2011 Reading: The girl and her bucket.

1. What went well with the strategy? Why?

a. Learners applied the strategy correctly.

-They followed each one of the steps of the strategy.

-They decided the number of words to be learnt.

- They really wanted to increase the number of words they know and asked the researcher for learn more than 15 and effectively they did it in a indirect way when they were reading the story.

2. What went poorly with the strategy?

Although the learners were able to recall words I observed that some of them struggled to use them in a text when I required completing it with the words they had learnt.

They were only able to recall words in isolated way.

Some of them forgot to come to class with the pieces of cards to be used with the strategy

Some of them are still lazy to work with the strategy. They want to do all in class: cut the cards, write the words and review them in class.

3. What surprised me?

The students were able to recall words but they were not able to use them when they had to use them to fill up a text with the words they had learnt. They enjoy checking the words with their peers.

4. What changes should be done?

I think that the strategy is ok. However the vocabulary needs to be applied in any kind of written exercise that challenges the students to recall the words with the purpose of using them.