



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja

ÁREA SOCIOHUMANÍSTICA

**TÍTULO DE LICENCIADO EN CIENCIAS DE LA EDUCACIÓN-MENCIÓN
INGLÉS**

**Teachers' and students' perceptions about vocabulary instruction in the
EFL classroom: A case study in the south region of Ecuador.**

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

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LOJA -ECUADOR

2018



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2018

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Magister

Paola Alexandra Cabrera Solano.

DOCENTE DE LA TITULACIÓN

De mi consideración

El presente trabajo de titulación: "Teachers' and students' perceptions about vocabulary instruction in the EFL classroom: A case study in the south region of Ecuador", realizado por Priscila Elizabeth Jara Sánchez ha sido orientado y revisado durante su ejecución, por cuanto se aprueba la presentación del mismo.

Loja, marzo de 2018

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DECLARACIÓN DE AUTORÍA Y CESIÓN DE DERECHOS

“Yo Jara Sánchez Priscila Elizabeth declaro ser autora del presente trabajo de titulación: teachers’ and students’ perceptions about vocabulary instruction in the EFL classroom: A case study in the south region of Ecuador, de la titulación licenciada en ciencias de la educación mención inglés, siendo Paola Alexandra Cabrera Solano directora del presente trabajo; y eximo expresamente a la Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja y a sus representantes legales de posibles reclamos o acciones legales. Además certifico que las ideas, conceptos, procedimientos y resultados vertidos en el presente trabajo investigativo, son de mi exclusiva responsabilidad.

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Dedication

In my life there are many people that helped me to achieve my English career successfully. For this reason, I want to dedicate this work to God who had given me wisdom and intelligence to get my profession. Furthermore, this work is dedicated to my mom who motivated and helped me to continue studying at the university. Besides, to my husband and children who have been my guidance and support during the whole academic course. Finally, I would like to dedicate this research work to my classmates who shared with me wonderful moments at the university because we were able to help each other.

Priscila Elizabeth Jara Sánchez

Acknowledgement

First of all, I want to thank all my UTPL English teachers because they shared their English knowledge with me. With the help of my teachers, I could achieve some goals proposed at the beginning of my career. Furthermore, I would like to thank my thesis advisor Mgtr, Paola Cabrera who is an excellent teacher that could guide me advice and suggestions for improving my thesis in each section that it contains. Besides my thesis tutor, I would like to thank to the three teachers who helped me to the accomplishment of this study when they gave me access to their classrooms to observe their English vocabulary lessons.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine teachers' and students' perceptions about vocabulary instruction in EFL classrooms. It was conducted at private and public high schools in the city of Loja. The participants were 47 EFL students, 24 at a private high school and 23 at a public institution from the first year of Senior high school. The instruments used to collect data were questionnaires that contained open-close questions, teachers' interviews and observation checklists that were used to observe the English vocabulary lessons.

Furthermore, this research followed a mixed-approach in which the quantitative approach was used to tabulate numerical data in the Excel program and to transform it into graphics. On the other hand, the qualitative method was used to analyze and contrast information that was collected during this study. The results show that teachers and students perceive English vocabulary instruction as an important tool in the acquisition of EFL because it allows them to communicate with others by using the target language effectively.

Key words: EFL, vocabulary instruction, learning styles, students' perceptions, teachers believes.

RESUMEN

Este estudio determinó las percepciones de docentes y estudiantes acerca de la instrucción del vocabulario en inglés como lengua forense en las aulas. Fue realizado en un colegio público y privado en la ciudad de Loja. Los participantes fueron 47 estudiantes de inglés, 24 del colegio privado y 23 de una institución pública de primer año de bachillerato. Los instrumentos usados fueron cuestionarios con preguntas abiertas y cerradas, entrevistas a profesores y hojas de verificación usadas para observar las clases de vocabulario en inglés.

Además, esta investigación siguió un enfoque-mixto el cual el enfoque cuantitativo fue usado para tabular datos numéricos en el programa de Excel y transformarlos en gráficos. El método cualitativo fue usado para analizar y contrastar información recolectada durante este estudio. Los resultados muestran que docentes y estudiantes perciben la instrucción del vocabulario en inglés como una importante herramienta en la adquisición del inglés como lengua forense porque les permite comunicarse usando el lenguaje extranjero efectivamente.

Palabras claves: creencias de docentes, estilos de aprendizaje, instrucción del vocabulario, inglés como lengua forense, percepciones de estudiantes.

INTRODUCTION

English is the most widely official language spoken around the world that makes many people interested in learning it as a second language. Nowadays, English as a second language plays an important role in other factors such as education, business, and communication. In Ecuador, English has become a mandatory subject that students need to achieve because all institutions require that they should have advanced English knowledge in their minds; however, most of the time it seems to be a difficult subject for learners to acquire because they do not have enough vocabulary knowledge and do not know grammatical patterns regarding the English language.

The importance of vocabulary teaching should be clear for all the institutions where English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is taught, even for teachers and students because vocabulary is the main tool to develop other relevant skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. When teachers and students are aware about the importance of vocabulary instruction, it enables them to communicate their ideas with their peers in the English language classes effectively and they can feel confident in any field where the second language is necessary. Carter (2016) argues that vocabulary knowledge is so necessary and important in the learning process because it allows learners to communicate with others correctly. Also, if they learn new words, it lets them avoid misunderstanding, which it is a serious problem that the majority of learners have to face when learning the target language.

During the last decades, many investigators have been interested in carrying out some studies about vocabulary instruction in the educational system. In fact, vocabulary learning involves some aspects that should be considered by teachers such as behavior, strategies and methodologies, which are important in order for students to master the English language successfully, so it is noticeable to mention that vocabulary teaching is very important in order to achieve proficiency in the second language. Besides, it is necessary that teachers motivate students when dictating their vocabulary lessons because if they consider the motivation as an important strategy, they are able to realize the learning progress of them. However, in some of the cases teachers have to face some difficulties when they have big classrooms, so it is important that they look for a good strategy that promotes students' meaningful learning.

Considering the importance and the role of vocabulary instruction in EFL, it is very relevant to analyze the students' needs regarding language learning. In this context, two common aspects are considered for learners such as pedagogical and didactic needs, for this reason teachers should make their English teaching lessons effective. According to the aspects that were mentioned above in relation to the importance of vocabulary instruction, the objectives of this research are to determine EFL teachers' and students' perceptions about vocabulary instruction in the south region of Ecuador, to identify students' beliefs about the

role of vocabulary instruction in language teaching, to determine teachers' perceptions regarding EFL vocabulary teaching and to compare teachers' and students' perceptions of vocabulary instruction in private and public education.

Furthermore, many people will be benefited through this study. For instance, teachers will be more conscious about the role they play with their students while teaching English and the impact of using strategies, methodologies, and material when teaching new words in order for students to understand their meaning and to produce the second language successfully. Also, the community can be benefited because, with the results of this study they can make some educational changes and improvements regarding the teaching-learning process in the classrooms, even educators can analyze these results to implement in their lessons extra time to focus on teaching vocabulary according to students' needs. To make more effective the English instruction it is necessary that teachers also design a variety of activities to promote faster acquisition of the target language.

Several studies have been conducted about the role of EFL vocabulary around the world. According to Alqahtani (2015), some researchers take into account the importance of vocabulary instruction in classrooms because learning new words allows students to learn the second language effectively. The same author also explains that the instruction of vocabulary in EFL is relevant since it enables them to feel motivated to work into the classroom appropriately. Considering the arguments of Alqahtani a study conducted by Zoghi and Mirzaei (2014) refers to the way that students learn words through two types of vocabulary contextualization (textual and visual) by using a video and text; additionally, he applied a pre-test and post-test to collect the necessary data in order to get the purpose of his study, so, he concluded that students learn more words visually than contextually.

Currently, the use of strategies is indispensable to teach vocabulary. For instance, Alhafeez (2015) researched about teachers and students' perceptions regarding the use of strategies in the teaching-learning process. In this study, two questionnaires were designed one for students and the other one for teachers. The results of this study show that there are similar beliefs between teachers and students in the use of some strategies such as memorization, technology, and dictionaries but there is not harmony in their perceptions about the use of two strategies, guessing and contextualizing into classrooms.

Moreover, Hermagustiana et al. (2017) conducted a study to understand teachers' perceptions based on the importance of vocabulary instruction. Four EFL teachers of a senior high school were interviewed and observed during their vocabulary lessons in order to determine beliefs in relation to vocabulary teaching. This study revealed that teachers had positive perceptions about vocabulary teaching and they think that when teaching new words, the students can develop some skills such as speaking and writing.

In conclusion, although this case study has achieved its objectives, there were some limitations to consider. This study was conducted with a small size of population where only 50 were part of the sample; hence, it is not possible to generalize the results for larger groups. On the other hand, in the application of instruments was necessary to design a questionnaire for students in Spanish version in order to facilitate the comprehension of students when answering the different items since they have a low level of English. However, in two sections of this study (literature review and interpretation of results) there were no limitations.

CHAPTER I: Literature Review

Vocabulary definitions

According to Barcroft (2016), vocabulary and lexicon are defined as a list of words that include prefixes, suffixes and so on. Besides, when learners acquire words correctly they are able to communicate in the English language. However, in order to make communication successfully, teachers need to find good strategies to help learners to receive meaningful information of new words in their minds. Additionally, the same author states that lexicon is an important branch of the English learning process since it is connected with other lexical elements such as sentences or phrases.

Moreover, Mckeown et al. (2017) explain that vocabulary is a necessary tool to learn the English language because it allows students to produce the L2 effectively. In addition, vocabulary learning helps students to comprehend several readings and they can continue learning new words from these texts. In this context, teachers and students feel confident when they have to read aloud any type of text because they have a large amount of vocabulary knowledge. As a result, they are able to understand and get the main idea of a topic. Additionally, by considering teachers' and students' perceptions about the importance of vocabulary instruction, students should be motivated to learn new words in order to write correct sentences.

Furthermore, Nations (2013) states that when students are familiarized with a new word, they have to be exposed to know other relevant components about it in order to communicate in English language; for instance, if a student is learning the Lexis "beautiful"; at first, he/she should learn the form (meaning and use) of this word by considering that it is an adjective. After that, the student should continue learning about the pronunciation of it and knowing if there are other words with related meaning. Finally, the student needs to use this word correctly in a sentence or a phrase in order for the reader to understand it.

Besides, according to Injeeli (2013), "words are the dresses of our thoughts, the better words we use, the better dressed up our thoughts appear" (p. 11). The same author explains that lexicon is an essential tool that aids language learning and provides the opportunity for learners to create good pieces of writing into classrooms. In other words, students write understandable statements in their writings if they are familiarized with a large number of words. Similarly, Nation (2013) mentions that students demonstrate their writing skill according to the number of words that they have acquired during a course and it can be analyzed in percentages by considering their level of proficiency in their vocabulary knowledge.

Consequently, Beck et al. (2013) provide information about the role of "context" in the acquisition of vocabulary knowledge. It is important to know that the word context plays an

essential role in vocabulary instruction because it has a strong connection with research and practice. In addition, two relevant features are part of contexts such as instructional contexts and naturally occurring text. The instructional context is related with writings that have intentional contexts in order to understand the meaning of unknown words. In contrast to naturally occurring text, students learn new words through a reading course. For these authors, the best way for students to acquire new words successfully is from context and through wide reading skill because students are able to figure out the meaning of words effectively.

In the same context, Blachowicz et al. (2013) provide information about the importance of vocabulary learning and teachers' beliefs towards vocabulary teaching. First of all, it is easier for learners to increase vocabulary when they are exploring oral contexts, repeating and referencing words. However, in order for students to become strong language users, they need to interact with their classmates or friends by practicing oral words, but it is clear that they not only can be focused on oral aspects because they can encounter other skills; for instance, reading can be introduced in vocabulary lessons in order to learn new contents of the second language. Learners can also find several words in written texts but if they have the opportunity to practice vocabulary orally they can do it. On the other hand, teachers have the responsibility of motivating students to learn new vocabulary by considering strategies to facilitate the vocabulary learning-teaching process.

Vocabulary teaching

Jones (2013) states that many teachers use textbooks into the class to teach and practice English vocabulary, but the use of textbooks is not enough because educators need to use different resources to teach the target words; also, it is necessary to make learners practice several times with the acquired words in order to learn and remember them. Besides, this author provides some helpful strategies in order for teachers to use them with their students to learn and remember English words. For instance, a strategy called "sell the vocabulary" refers to teachers who motivate students to remember vocabulary because it can be used for future activities; another strategy "stress about stress" is based on pronouncing words in a correct way since it is important that students know the correct stress of words in order to pronounce them accurately.

Similarly, Billingsley (2016) argues that learning words play an important role that students should put into practice in everyday classes and also in their lives. This is because words are powerful when learners want to communicate or express ideas in English. In fact, when students learn basic vocabulary, they are ready to learn more advanced or complicated words and also to work successfully in several English classes. Additionally, with a high level of vocabulary knowledge students are able to master the four main skills such as listening, speaking, writing and reading. In the same way, this author establishes that when students do

not have enough vocabulary knowledge, they cannot use the target language into the class. In other words, students can fail by making some activities proposed by the teacher in a lesson class because if they are not able to achieve the goal of the activity successfully, it means that they have poor vocabulary knowledge. For this reason, the teacher plays an important role in vocabulary teaching and she/he has to apply interesting tasks and strategies in which students will be motivated to respond faster but considering their needs, ages, and level of understanding. Likewise, successful English classes depend on the number of new words that learners have learnt; however, it needs the use of strategies by teachers to improve English vocabulary knowledge in students (Billingsley, 2016).

Furthermore, Injeeli (2013) affirms that vocabulary teaching is an important tool in order to improve expressions and students can communicate in the foreign language. Thus, the use of a list of different strategies or methods is considerable for teachers to conduct their classes more efficiently. Also, this author proposes some methods that are helpful such as memorization, key word method, basic English vocabulary, and headword; all of these methods are tools of great importance because learners can improve grammar and structure words. Also, the implementation of these methods provide chances for students to understand English language and making themselves understood. Again, memorization is a method for vocabulary acquisition that associate words in the native language with words in the foreign language. Nevertheless, there is a problem with the memorization method because students tend to learn words in insolation but they are not able to understand them in context. In the case of the “key word method” helps students to learn basic words and it is used when the teacher wants to work with essential words before starting with texts.

In addition, Allen (1999) suggests that the best strategy to teach vocabulary is by reading because when students practice at home or school the reading skill several times they increase their vocabulary knowledge. In the case of students from high schools, they need the extensive reading strategy and direct instruction. In that way, students can develop fluency when reading and learning more words. However, teachers need to be aware that students need the support and guidance from them in order to explain unknown words. Equally important, shared reading is another strategy that helps teachers as well as students in the process of vocabulary learning since teachers provide opportunities for learners not only to learn vocabulary but to learn the pronunciation of words. This is because the teacher reads for her/his students and they follow the reading with their eyes and they have to pay attention to unknown sound words.

Similarly, Kelley et al. (2010) explain that academic vocabulary instruction is a useful area that allows students to enter high schools with a high level of reading comprehension. In consequence, vocabulary instruction provides opportunities for learners to improve other skills

and especially for learners who want to become strong readers. Therefore, these authors state that the incorporation of activities for teaching words, motivate students to work with word consciousness. This means that students should be curious about a new word and play with it by finding ways to learn it. They can also learn words by reading and they have to work hard in order to understand different words they find in a text.

Currently, some instructors consider different ways for teaching new vocabulary in EFL context. From this point, the use of technology can make students comprehend easier the meaning of different English words. For instance, Cabrera et al. (2018) state that the use of a tool named Pixton facilitates the teaching process of EFL grammar and vocabulary because it provides to teachers the opportunity to create didactic materials such as dialogues, images, and comics in order to motivate their students in the learning process.

Strategies for teaching vocabulary

Wahyuni and Rozani (2016) provide an interesting strategy that most of the teachers should know. This strategy is used to teach vocabulary through the use of a bingo game that learners can play individually or in pairs. With the application of this game, teachers can make the teaching process fun and students can be motivated to learn and master new words by identifying their meanings when the teacher uses this game in the class. In fact, when students learn new words they have to demonstrate interest in learning them. Additionally, the teacher's role is very important because she/he has to create effective strategies to help learners master vocabulary knowledge. In contrast, some elementary learners feel bored by learning new vocabulary and it is due to teachers do not provide enough strategies for teaching vocabulary. Hence, some teachers manage their classes by memorizing and repeating words every time; and this makes students feel unmotivated and even they can forget these words in later days.

Additionally, Sprenger (2017) provides some strategies to teach vocabulary. First of all, this author writes three stages that learners should follow in order to learn new vocabulary. First of all, students need to be prepared to know basic vocabulary according to their level of understanding. Then, they have to continue familiarizing with high-frequency academic vocabulary (words that have multiple meanings). Finally, they have to be involved with low-frequency specialized vocabulary (words that have technical terms). In addition, for this author vocabulary is the most relevant content within English language knowledge. Significantly, some strategies are recommended from this author; for instance, a rich language environment; this strategy is focused on how learners discuss words in class and how they have a direct instruction with the teacher in relation to vocabulary. Another strategy is that students learn words individually; however, teachers need to be aware of students' needs and help them to explore other types of resources to learn new words.

Besides, according to Railean et al. (2017), learning a new language depends on students' effort; however, they can use a variety of strategies in which they can be benefited from them, but learners have to choose effective strategies to solve some problems they have when learning some elements of the language that they want to acquire. Thus, if learners select good strategies, they can become great learners and with a high quality of level proficiency regarding vocabulary. The application of strategies not only help students in the learning process because they also facilitate the instruction of teachers in their lessons. For this reason, it is necessary that instructors use different strategies in order to create a successful learning environment in their classrooms. Additionally, these authors argue that there is a relationship between metacognition and strategies because they work together in the acquisition of a new language. Therefore, metacognition plays an important role in successful learning strategies, but this process works better with students that have a high level of English knowledge. This is because learners at that level have a high critical thinking and they can conceptualize the role that metacognition and strategies play in their learning outcomes.

Vocabulary Learning

Webb & Nation (2017) state that for learning lexis it is important that teachers know their roles in the classroom. Teachers should be aware of the importance of how making a significant planning and preparation related to their classes. Also, if teachers do not make a good planning, learners are exposed to fail in their progress by learning vocabulary. Consequently, the main teacher' role is to teach words in an explicit way and to find strategies in which learners can acquire lexis in a motivated way.

Moreover, Barcroft (2015) mentions that lexical input is a process in which learners are exposed to use different resources (tasks) in order to learn vocabulary. Additionally, Barcroft explains that for a successful acquisition of vocabulary language, the lexical input plays an important role because students are motivated to use specific tasks in order to acquire new words. Interestingly, when students hear different words in a spoken language or when they read texts, they are able to learn a considerable amount of them with their correct meanings and uses in order to process vocabulary knowledge.

In addition, Jensen (2017) establishes that the best methodology that teachers can consider in order to make students learn vocabulary is when they are exposed to study and learn English words for any evaluation. Hence, when students enrich their vocabulary, they write correct sentences by taking into account which word should go in a correct place and especially for those who like to read because at the moment of reading they can understand the text and get a general idea about it. Basically, Jensen mentions that one method to learn lexis is through repetition, but it is not just about repeating again and again because this

method requires that students also practice into the class with activities that teachers can provide for them to improve vocabulary knowledge.

Furthermore, Barcroft (2016) mentions that there is an important aspect in the acquisition of new words. Learners are exposed to have some opportunities to hear or to read words. At the moment that learners hear or read any word, they can follow a process called input. The Input word means that students receive information about how a word is composed: formal, semantic, and mapping; it means that students have this process of input and therefore they can realize about some characteristics of a word such as word form, word meaning, and form-meaning mapping. As a result, this process helps students to learn individual words successfully.

Moreover, according to Krashen (2009), a large amount of vocabulary knowledge is appropriate in order to develop second language acquisition. Therefore, for acquiring vocabulary in a second language it is necessary the use of good dictionaries rather than grammar books. At the same time, Aleeva and Safiullina (2016) are in favor of the use of dictionaries in foreign language acquisition. Most of the secondary teachers are interested in finding the best material in order to teach lexis. Thus, the use of dictionaries in EFL provides an effective language learning. Because they help according to some necessities of students regarding vocabulary; however, teachers not only can make use of dictionaries, they can also find out other tools that can facilitate the teaching of words such as textbooks, workbooks, teachers' books and so on but the first resource is a dictionary in order to promote to the selection of vocabulary with its corresponding meaning.

The effect of using authentic material for teaching vocabulary

With the use of the authentic material in EFL classrooms students are motivated to learn successfully the foreign language. Hence, when learners are involved with the appropriate material they can be prepared to connect their knowledge with real-world situations (Hilal & Hamed, 2014).

Consequently, according to Tomlinson (2003), vocabulary teaching has the main role of supporting other language skills such as speaking, listening, reading and writing. For instance, EFL learners need to consider a large amount of vocabulary learning and it can be done by taking into account a considerable period of time in order to learn that amount of words. Thus, these authors mention three main aspects about the material used in vocabulary teaching. First, one aspect is that teachers should consider the material as an important element at the moment of planning to teach vocabulary; as a result, it provides positive results in the language acquisition process. Second, there are some conditions (noticing, retrieving, and elaborating) that are involved in the learning process in order to improve vocabulary. Equally, these conditions can be related to the teaching material; in other words, the material

should be designed in order to put these conditions into practice. Third, these conditions have a relationship with the four main strands such as meaning focus input, meaning focus output, language focus learning, and fluency development. In fact, successful vocabulary materials need to be supported by the design of activities and consequently, the conditions mentioned before can work appropriately in relation to the acquisition of new words.

Similarly, Cahyaningrum et al. (2016) argue that EFL students need to be supported by supplementary material in order to develop their progress in language acquisition. In this context, teachers should be aware when choosing materials for her/his students according to their needs. But, for some teachers it is not easy to find good material to teach their students, some of them have the habit of using only textbooks and they do not use other additional resources. Thus, it is considerable that teachers use other types of materials in order to achieve the objectives set for learners.

Learning environment

According to Midgley (2012), there are two aspects to consider in the learning environment classroom. First of all, teachers have to pay attention to the different “learning styles” that their students have and put them into consideration when teaching vocabulary. In fact, some teachers believe that when they practicing language vocabulary with activities according to each learning style it is useful because it allows motivating learners in the learning vocabulary process. Second, it is relevant that teachers put in practice a social interaction among students at the moment of teaching English words. At the beginning of a course, teachers have to promote social goals by making students interact among them in order to get interesting English lessons, but these goals should be related with academic purposes to follow the educational approach regarding vocabulary teaching.

Moreover, Hindaman et al. (2013) explain that there is an important relationship between learning environment and teachers’ effectiveness because when a teacher works effectively into the classroom, she/he is able to motivate her/his students by practicing the language. In addition, a good attitude of the teacher in a lesson class gives learners the opportunity to enjoy a successful environment to learn the new language. Thus, to make it efficient, teachers should be aware when designing a good “planning instruction”, and when assessing students it should be correct in order to make an excellent teaching language practice.

Furthermore, an effective learning environment is involved with some necessary aspects in which educators should take into account when they manage a class in order to control the behavior of learners. For instance, teachers who prepare their classes should consider the learning environment in their classrooms; in other words, they should spend extra time on preparing their classroom management especially by motivating their students to learn

the new language which it is the main goal to become successful learning environment more active, positive and safe. In fact, another aspect that is remarkable is about students' perceptions regarding skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Besides, all of these skills need to be managed in the classrooms correctly in order to improve language learning, since they play an important role in the classroom environment (Wiseman & Hunt, 2014). However, in some cases, there are beginner teachers that cannot control some relevant aspects into the classroom such as the discipline, students' motivation, learning styles and so on. When these aspects are not considered by the teacher it is a problem for teachers as well as students because the classroom environment can become boring for learners. Particularly, this is a challenge for teachers to face some difficulties in their first English practices since this is a serious problem because most of them can feel stressed by teaching the language. Besides, Wiseman and Hunt explain eight problems that beginner teachers present when they cannot manage their classes such as classroom discipline, students motivation, indifferences that students present among them, students assessing works, relationship with their parents, management of class work, poor or inappropriate materials to work in class, and dealing with individual problems that each learner shows.

Moreover, Garrett (2014) believes that an appropriate learning environment depends on how teachers manage the classroom. There are some areas in which classroom development is involved. For instance, the physical design of the classroom which means the organization of a class; for instance, in which place the desks of students or teachers are ordered, even the place of the material that is located in the class, etc. Additionally, teachers take into consideration rules and routines in order to gain time by applying activities especially at the beginning of the class. Then, teachers make students have a good relationship with them. Another is that educators organize a good class plan in order to make an effective instruction of language acquisition. In fact, one of the most important points in a learning environment is the control of discipline in which the educator has to act positively in order to avoid misbehavior.

Effective teachers in classrooms

According to Seghayer (2017), effective EFL teachers make use of different methods for teaching the new language. Additionally, teachers also have to pay attention to other important elements to have an active language teaching; this means that they also have to find strategies for developing vocabulary, grammar and, the four skills. For instance, effective teachers are conscious when planning curriculum design, tasks, activities, evaluation and so on. All of these factors are essential for successful teachers which provide a direction for them to explore students' needs. Currently, a lesson plan design is an exclusive part of the teaching

process that educators should develop every time; as a result, when teachers design good lesson plans, they are effective in language teaching.

Miller (2012) describes some interesting characteristics that effective teachers should have to teach the English language. First, an EL teacher needs to have a positive energy. Second, the effective teacher loves to teach in EFL and she/he feels motivated to find the best way to catch the attention of students in language teaching. Third, a teacher who is creative by designing colorful material his/her learners never feel bored into the class. Active teachers not only use books in the class, it is relevant that they use an interesting material such as filling gaps, games, quizzes, problem solving and so on. Fourth, learners need to work with harmony in classrooms by controlling the behavior of themselves. There are some students that are nervous and they need a teacher that provides confidence for them, especially when they respond aloud something teachers have to try that they do not feel afraid; to do this effectively, the teacher has to be funny in order for students learn the language in an enjoyable way.

Fifth, learners need to be challenged; for that reason, students that pass to the front of the class need to feel confidence by their teacher in order to enhance the language learning. Sixth, this is one of the most important characteristics that effective teachers should have; if a teacher knows how to transfer information to learners related to language learning, students can acquire it without much effort due to educators are able to explain elements of language by using single, explicit and specific explanations.

Moreover, Dincer et al. (2013), explain that for an effective learning it is necessary an effective teacher. Therefore, there are some characteristics that differentiate good teachers such as socio-affective, pedagogical knowledge, subject-matter knowledge and personality characteristics. First, it is crucial to realize when teachers are social or interact with their students; so this means that teachers are “socio- affective”. This characteristic is related with the motivation of students into classrooms, being enthusiastic for teaching, providing time for solving some doubts of learners, having positive attitudes for each learner, creating a good atmosphere classroom in order to teach and learn effectively.

Secondly, a pedagogical knowledge plays an important role for effective teachers. Teachers should know about the best way to use appropriate strategies and procedures in order to follow in a course. In other words, this means that teachers know about the teaching process regarding their subjects and this is important because they are able to domain the language. Thus, students can feel encouraged to learn because they realize that their teachers are organized by explaining and clarifying the features of the new acquired language. Third, the teacher should manage perfectly his/her subject because some aspects should be considered such as fluency, accuracy, lexicon, and pronunciation. If a teacher manages

effectively these aspects, it means that she/he is an effective teacher to teach vocabulary, considering their level of English knowledge

Additionally, effective teachers are kind, flexible, optimistic, enthusiastic, positive, etc and successful English teachers should consider these essential personal characteristics that help them to teach properly and consequently learners can feel confident with their teachers.

Learning Styles

Learning styles are related to some abilities that each student has in order to develop efficiently the new language. In addition, a student is connected with cognitive, effective and psychological components that are related with learning styles and these elements are familiarized with learning environment. The main role of learning styles is that allows students to perceive, to interact, and to respond to language acquisition (Kaminska, 2014).

Besides, Boneva and Mihova (2012) remark that learning styles are the different forms that students learn the English language in an individual way. The learning style that every student has is probably because of their past experiences of education and learning according to the type of teaching that they had in their previous learning outcomes. Learning styles give students the opportunity to learn all subjects of a specific language. Additionally, there are learners that like to learn by listening and speaking, but others prefer to learn by using texts or even use visual tools. However, the majority of learners have a mixed learning style which they use in order to study the new language.

Consequently, the same author provides useful information about learning style and vocabulary learning. Learning styles have a relationship with vocabulary teaching techniques since they have to learn new words depending on the style of learning that students have; for instance, a good technique for visual learners is providing them images or pictures with words because it is more effective than using words in isolation. However, teachers not only have to focus on the use of techniques to teach vocabulary because they have to choose appropriate materials and methods in order for students learn effectively the language depending on their styles of learning.

In addition, Bakar and Ali (2016) state that each student shows differences when learning the language at the moment that they have an interaction with their classmates by affecting the learning environment in the classroom. Therefore, one of these differences is that each learner uses different material in a course. Another is how the process of information acts deeply in a cognitive way in students. These differences allow students to use the information in future practices. Thus, when students respond to language learning it can be by providing any type of stimulus but the most important aspect in order to perform it is by identifying the learning style that every student has. In other words, learning style is the way of how learners receive information and how they produce it by considering the stimulus learning with

psychological, effective, and cognitive components. Additionally, the author explains the relationship between cognitive and learning styles. Cognitive learning deals with the learning process and learning styles contributes to behavioral aspects and also how students respond in a learning situation. Therefore, both elements work together:

Currently, the use of technology has rapidly increased in most of the schools. For instance, Bulman et al. (2015) argue that the innovation and the use of computers in schools has increased in the last years. Thus, around the world a large number of institutions have their own computers for individual learners and with their corresponding access to the internet. As a result, it allows students to improve learning outcomes. Whereas, Balakrishnan and Lay (2015) explain that students learn through different learning styles; therefore, teachers should make learners master the new language by applying different activities. Otherwise, there is a practical resource in order for students can understand the language and it is “technology” in which teachers need use to it in order to facilitate the instruction in their classes. Interestingly, with the use of social media technology students can learn by enjoying in order to achieve their established proposes and it allows students to perform another type of activities by using this resource that provides students opportunities to experience effectively in the learning process (Veletsianos & Navarrete, 2012).

In relation to teachers’ and students’ perceptions regarding vocabulary instruction, some studies have been conducted in different parts of the world and these studies will be described in the following section:

Hermagustiana et al. (2017) conducted a study about teachers’ beliefs regarding vocabulary instruction. The purpose of this study was to investigate the beliefs of Indonesian teachers regarding vocabulary instruction. This is a qualitative study in which researchers have used semi-structured interviews and direct class observations, by using a checklist guide and notes in order to collect data from four voluntary Indonesian teachers (females) of senior high school. This study was developed in East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The participants were teachers who had 5 years of experience in language teaching according to the objectives established in this study. The results show that teachers have developed well cognitions in relation to vocabulary instruction considering beliefs, perceptions, and the importance of vocabulary teaching and taking into account which words and how they should be learned. For instance, all the participants could clarify that vocabulary is so necessary because students learn to speak, write and understand English elements.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Amiryousefi (2015) provided information about teachers’ and students’ beliefs on the importance of vocabulary learning strategies. The purpose of this study was to analyze the students’ and teachers’ thoughts when they learn and teach new words by using useful strategies. In addition, this study had a sample of 392

participants: 320 students and 72 English teachers (their ages were around of 21 to 58) from Iran Language Institute, Pouyesh, Gouyesh, Iranian Academic Center for Education and Iran. In order to collect data for this study, the researcher used one instrument called the 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire. This instrument measures teachers' and students' beliefs on learning and teaching vocabulary (Tran, 2011). The results revealed that teachers and students believe that the application of strategies in a classroom to teach vocabulary is necessary to make vocabulary learning successfully.

Another study conducted by Zoghi and Mirzaei (2014) aimed to identify if students learned better new words through textual or visual items by using a contextualized text or a video. This was a comparative study that the investigator used a pre-test and a post-test as instruments. The participants were 72 pre-intermediate English language learners (male and female) who were 14 to 30 years old. This study was developed in Arman English Institute in Khodabandeh and also in Islamic Azad University, Khodabandeh, Zajan, and Iran. The results demonstrated that students who were provided to learn words visually manifested successful results than those who were exposed to learn vocabulary through reading and writing with the use of contextualized texts.

Similarly, another study conducted by Alhafeez (2015) had the purpose of investigating about teachers' and students' beliefs in relation to the use of different strategies in learning English vocabulary. The method used to conduct this study was a quantitative approach to analyze data of students and teachers. The researcher conducted this study with a sample of 133 EFL teachers and 306 learners who belonged to ninth grade and this study was from Irbid. The instruments used for this study were two questionnaires in which one was for teachers and the other one for learners. The findings showed that students and teachers believes had a harmony between them about the process of teaching and learning vocabulary taking into consideration the strategies that were used such as memorization, technology, and dictionaries. However, there was a contradictory harmony between their beliefs in the use of two strategies such as guessing and contextualizing in the teaching-learning process of new English words.

Erkaya and Drower (2012) carried out a case study with the purpose of analyzing some perceptions on the importance of using teaching and learning techniques to improve vocabulary knowledge. This study needed the participation of one EL learner in Turkish who was 19 years old. The researcher used observations, interviews, and documents as instruments to identify what techniques can improve vocabulary teaching and to learn at an intermediate level. About the documents had a strong relationship between English and application of the vocabulary. The results showed that the student improved vocabulary knowledge when he was exposed to learn it with the use of useful and significant techniques

such as repetition, cards and dictionaries. At the same time, the participant used both low and high-level strategies to learn vocabulary, he was able to understand the meaning of new words easier with the application of strategies to teach vocabulary.

CHAPTER II: Method

Settings and Participants

This study was conducted at public and private institutions in the city of Loja. The participants were 3 teachers and 47 students (24 at a private high school and 23 at a public institution) who belonged to the first year of senior high school. Students' ages varied between 15 to 17 years old. In the public high school, teachers taught four hours of English classes per week while in the private high school students received six hours of per week.

It is important to mention that according to the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, students at first year of senior high school have a B1 proficiency level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

Procedures

While conducting this study, some stages were considered in order to collect and analyze information in relation to vocabulary instruction in EFL classrooms and also to organize and interpret data in an understandable way. First of all, a mixed-method approach was used in this study in order to collect data from the participants. According to Creswell (2015), the mixed-method is an integration of two main components such as quantitative and qualitative approaches in order to conduct a research that involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting data. In this approach, qualitative method was applied for getting results about teachers' perceptions regarding EFL vocabulary instruction through an interview instrument. On the other hand, a quantitative questionnaire instrument was used to collect data about students' beliefs related to vocabulary instruction in EFL classroom.

This research project began with a theoretical section that included some sub-topics related to this study. Therefore, a literature review was designed in order to gather theoretical information that helped the researcher get familiarized with the topic. The information was searched from other relevant resources such as books, internet, and articles that provided relevant theory about the importance vocabulary instruction. Then, three types of instruments such as questionnaires, interviews, and observation checklists were designed in order to collect the necessary information about students' and teachers perceptions in relation to the importance of vocabulary instruction.

Later, the researcher continued with the application of the instruments for students and teachers. The questionnaires were applied to students who took 30 minutes to complete them and interviews to teachers that answer the questions in ten minutes from the first year of senior high school in both institutions. Besides, the questionnaires and interviews included open and close questions about the characteristics of vocabulary lessons. The observation checklist instrument contained some questions that helped to the researcher in the observation class to confirm or not if educators taught English vocabulary into the classroom and how they

managed their vocabulary lessons when applying strategies and different materials in order for students to acquire target words in a motivated way.

After that, a tabulation process was necessary to interpret and analyze the gathered information. In the tabulation all the responses of participants at both institutions were joined in order to analyze them as one set; however, in an item “importance of vocabulary instruction” the analysis was comparative between the two high schools. In addition, Microsoft Excel 2013 was used in order to count the number of answers provided by students in each item of the questionnaires and they were transformed into percentages giving the necessary results to interpret and represent them by using statistical graphs with the same program.

Additionally, the analysis was written according to the results of each graph (percentages) and with relevant aspects of students and teachers responses. The various findings were integrated through a “triangulation” process by comparing data from students and teachers; then these results were confirmed with the information gathered from the observations. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations were drawn based on the objectives established at the beginning of this study.

CHAPTER III: Results and Discussion

Description, Analysis and Interpretation of Results

This section presents the results that were obtained after the application of three instruments that were applied at a public and a private institution. The instruments were questionnaires, interviews, and observation checklists used to observe six English vocabulary lessons. Furthermore, the analysis describes and provides an understanding about teachers' and students' perceptions on vocabulary instruction in EFL classrooms.

English learning

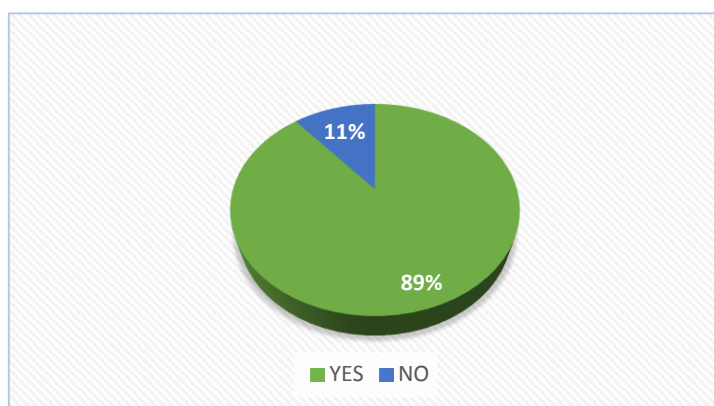


Figure 1: Students' preferences about vocabulary learning.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

The results of figure one show that 89% of students like to learn English vocabulary, while 11 % of them do not like to learn it. Students claimed that learning new words is important for some reasons, it allows them to understand the new language better or travel to another English speaking country to practice the target language, to speak it fluently and to improve the writing skill correctly with a considerable amount of words. However, some students perceive the acquisition of new English words complicated because the majority of words in English are difficult to memorize and write.

Besides, making emphasis on students' perceptions, teachers also explained that when students learn English vocabulary they can use it in real situations. They also mentioned that vocabulary is an important aspect when teaching English as a foreign language because students are able to convey messages or ideas once they acquire different target words. In this regard, Billingsley (2016) remarks that learning vocabulary is an essential aspect that learners need to consider since it facilitates them to communicate and express different English

thoughts by using the new acquired words. In the class observation it was confirmed that students of both institutions were positively motivated to learn new words since they were able to use them in the classroom.

Students' motivation to learn English vocabulary

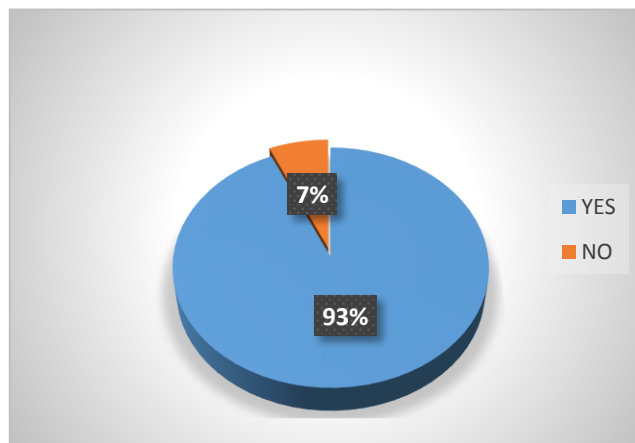


Figure 2: Students' motivation to learn English vocabulary.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

Regarding students' motivation to learn English vocabulary, graph 2 demonstrates that 93% of learners are motivated by their teachers to learn new words and 7 % consider that they are not motivated to learn it. In this context, students feel motivated and enthusiastic to learn new words because of the methodology used by their teachers in each English vocabulary lesson. Besides, teachers believe that motivating their students is relevant when teaching vocabulary because if learners are motivated to learn new words, they are able to understand their meanings, so, students can use them in real contexts.

According to the observations, teachers could motivate students to learn new words at the beginning of each class by making students to interact among them or to play some games in groups that allowed them feel encouraged to start the new topic related to vocabulary learning. According to Kelley et al. (2010), the best way to motivate students for learning new words is through the application of activities and the methodology that teachers use in the vocabulary class; however, learners should find different types of strategies in order for them to learn vocabulary by themselves.

Teachers' vocabulary instruction

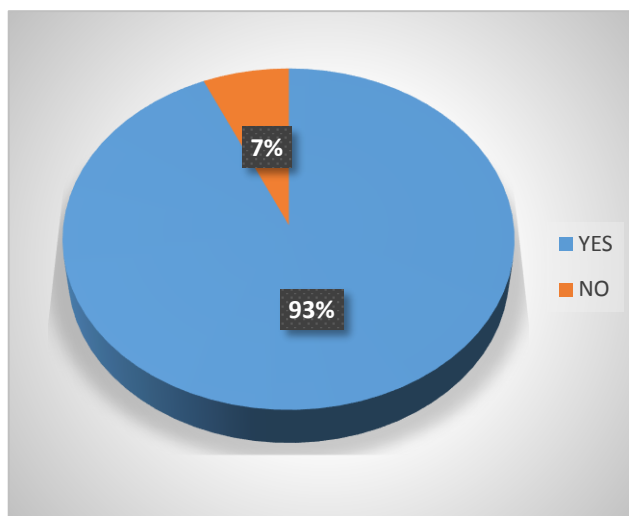


Figure 3: Students understand their instructors when teaching vocabulary.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

As the figure above demonstrates, 93% of students are able to understand their instructors when teaching English vocabulary, and 7% of students do not understand their teachers when teaching it. In this context, teachers confirmed that they used authentic material in order for students to understand the instruction of new English words; in relation to their responses, the observations evidenced that most of the time educators did not use enough material in vocabulary instruction because they only used the workbook in each English lesson. However, only one teacher used a variety of material to teach target words such as flashcards, wordcards and pictures. Osborne (2005) states that the use of course books in the classroom is not enough because teachers should design authentic material to find the students' requirements in relation to their needs. For this reason, it is necessary that teachers use different useful materials in order to expand their vocabulary knowledge.

Authentic material in the classroom to teach English vocabulary

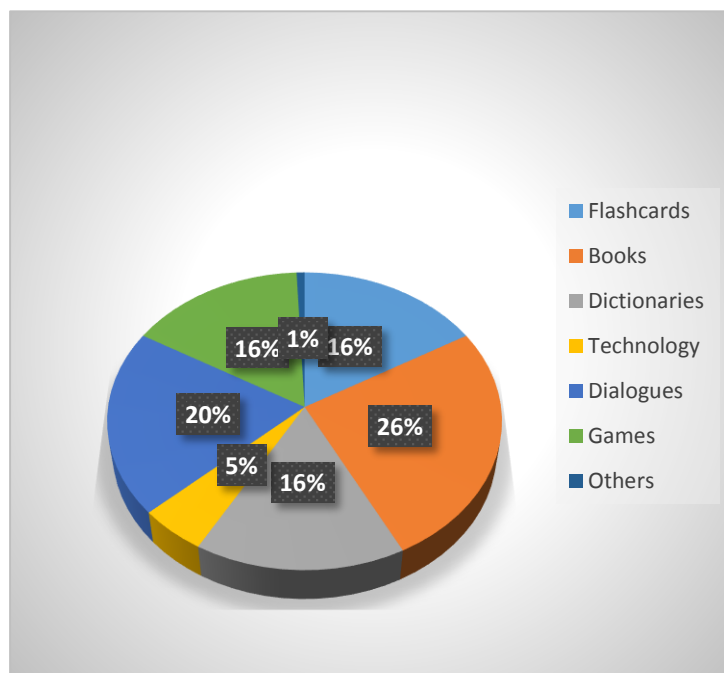


Figure 4: Available material in the class to teach English vocabulary.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

Graph 4 refers to the use of material in the classroom to learn English vocabulary. It is noticeable that the main material used in the classroom is the book (26%). Nevertheless, other types of material are used in a low percentage such as dialogues (20%), dictionaries (16%), flashcards (16%), games (16%), and technology (5%). The teachers correspondingly reported that when teaching new words they use other types of materials in the classroom such as cards, flashcards, worksheets, pictures, dictionaries, big-paper, and textbooks. However, during the observation, it was possible to notice that teachers do not use interesting material to teach words; although one of them used flashcards, wordcards and realia in order to explain the meaning of vocabulary. Broadly speaking, learners are not provided with authentic material to learn vocabulary; hence, teachers should consider the use of different types of materials to provide the meaning of new words in order to let learners to connect their previous knowledge with real situations (Hamed & Hilal, 2014).

Strategies to learn new English words

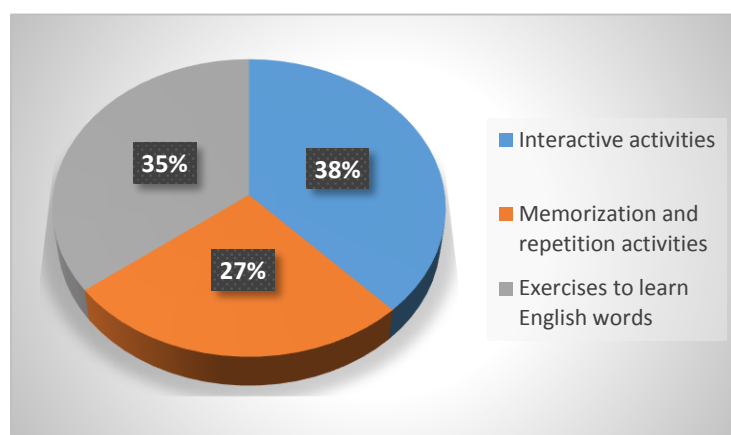


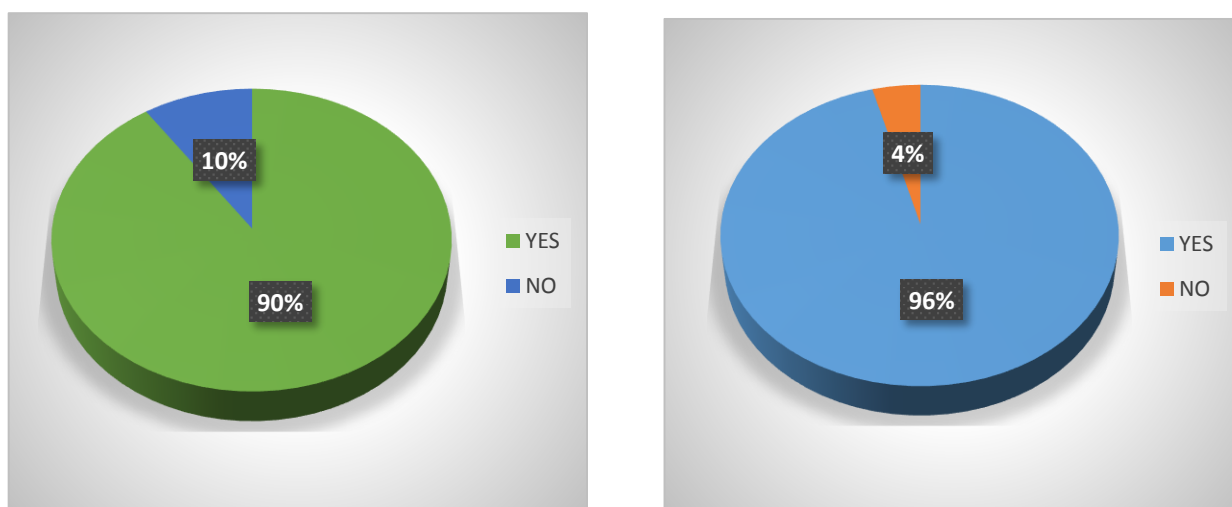
Figure 5: Strategies to learn new English words.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

The results of figure 5 demonstrate that 38% of students perceive that the strategy used to learn vocabulary deals with interactive activities but 35% of students learn new words through exercises and 27% of them acquire English words through memorization and repetition activities. With reference to this aspect, teachers who were interviewed mentioned some strategies considering them useful into classrooms to expand vocabulary such as scanning pictures, small groups, pair teams, individual works, games, brainstorming, underline-circle, highlighting-folder, flashcards, power point presentation, videos, texts, magazines, worksheets, pictures, dictation and gestures – dynamics. In contrast to teachers' responses, the observations evidenced that most of the time teachers do not use different strategies when teaching new words. In addition, Railean et al. (2017) explain that the use of strategies in the classroom can help learners to acquire the language successfully by providing them the opportunity to understand easier the features of the language especially when learning English vocabulary.

Students and teachers' perceptions about the importance of vocabulary instruction



At the public high school

At the private high school

Figure 6: Importance of vocabulary instruction.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

According to students' perceptions, vocabulary lessons are important for the acquisition of the foreign language. Most of the students from public (90%) and private (96%) high schools reported that vocabulary instruction is relevant in the learning process of new words while other learners (10%) and (4%) from public and private high schools respectively, perceive that is not important. Teachers corroborated students' perception by remarking that vocabulary is the best tool that should be implemented in their classes in order for them to promote English words effectively. Besides, these responses were verified in the observations because all teachers provided learners with useful vocabulary in relation to each topic that they prepared for their students. Hence, Blachowicz et al. (2013) state that learning new words is necessary for learners and teachers because they can increase vocabulary when exploring oral contexts, repeating and referencing words.

Vocabulary and other language skills

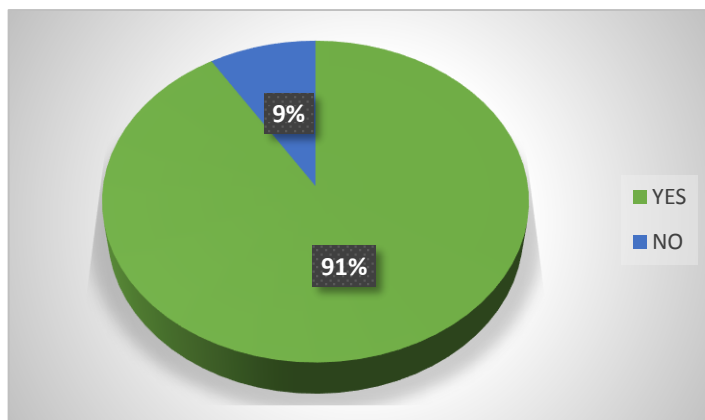


Figure 7: The use of learned words with the four English skills.

Author: Priscila Jara.

Source: Student's Questionnaire.

According to students' responses about the use of new vocabulary words in the four English skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). This figure 7, indicates that 91% of students use the vocabulary learned with the other skills while 9% of them do not do it. During the interview, teachers were completely sure that vocabulary is implemented in the four skills and it should be practiced in every day English classes. Thus, to confirm the responses of students and teachers, it was observed that teachers and students used the target words in the English skills especially in reading and listening. Besides, Graves et al. (2013) indicate that students expand vocabulary when they are exposed to a wide range of language experiences considering the use of learned words with the other skills.

CONCLUSIONS

EFL students and teachers perceive English vocabulary instruction as an important aspect within the teaching-learning process because it gives learners the opportunity to master and use the target language correctly.

The main role that vocabulary instruction plays in English learning according to students' beliefs, is that it helps them to understand and communicate effectively in the target language; for instance, they can use vocabulary to speak in English fluently or even to write clear statements without mistakes.

Teachers perceive motivation as an essential element for learners during the English vocabulary lessons because this important factor helped them to understand the meaning of English words. For this reason, the instructors that were part of this study motivated students to learn English words through the methodology used in the classroom.

There is a slight discrepancy among teachers and students perceptions regarding the use of vocabulary strategies. While students affirmed that their instructors use memorization and repetition to teach vocabulary, teachers numbered some strategies such as pair work, individual work, games, worksheets and so on, which they consider useful to teach new English words.

The participants consider that the implementation of useful and pertinent material to teach and learn vocabulary is essential since it enables students to learn the English subject in a funny way.

According to teachers' and students' perception, vocabulary instruction has a positive effect in listening, speaking, reading, and writing components which is beneficial for students to become proficient in each of the four language skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite teachers use various strategies in order to teach new vocabulary, it is necessary that they use a new strategy for each vocabulary lesson or topic. In this way, students' proficiency level of English vocabulary can be improved.

When teaching vocabulary, instructors should consider the integration of listening and speaking activities to make learners practice the learned words where each student participates actively.

Teachers should create useful materials in order to make vocabulary classes more interesting when teaching vocabulary so that students can learn new English words in an easier way.

It is recommendable that educators use their class schedule appropriately in order to teach English words, for instance, if they have three hours a week available, they can use two hours to explain the meaning of words and the extra hour, to practice the learned words with different activities that motivate students in the learning process.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1. Student's Questionnaire



**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS
STUDENTS' QUESTIONNARY**

Objective: The objective of this questionnaire is to collect information to determine your perception on learning-teaching vocabulary in English language.

This survey is anonymous!

1. Part 1: demographic situation

Gender

- a) Female ()
- b) Male ()

2. Age: _____ years

Part 2: Perceptions about the teaching-learning process of English vocabulary instruction.

Choose the best option.

<p>1. Do you like English language?</p> <p>a) Yes ()</p> <p>b) No ()</p>	<p>6. What is your English vocabulary level?</p> <p>a) Excellent ()</p> <p>b) Very good ()</p> <p>c) Good ()</p> <p>d) Bad ()</p>
<p>2. Do you like to learn English vocabulary?</p> <p>a) Yes ()</p> <p>b) No ()</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>7. Do you easily understand your instructor when he/she teaches the meaning of new words?</p> <p>a) Yes ()</p> <p>b) No ()</p>
<p>3. Why do you consider that learning English vocabulary is important?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>You can choose more than one answer:</p> <p>8. Which materials do you have in your class in order to facilitate the learning process of English vocabulary?</p> <p>a) Flashcards ()</p> <p>b) Books ()</p>

<hr/> <hr/>	e) Dictionaries () f) Technological resources () g) Dialogues with your classmates () h) Games to learn new words () i) Others (specify) () <hr/> <hr/>
<p>4. Do you think that your English vocabulary classes are interesting?</p> <p>a) Yes () b) No ()</p> <p>Why?</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<p>You can choose more than one answer:</p> <p>9. Which of the following strategies are used by your instructor to teach English vocabulary?</p> <p>a) Interactive methodology () b) Memorization and repetition of words () c) Exercises to allow the application of new words in a communicative or written way () d) Others (specify) ()</p> <hr/>
<p>You can choose more than one answer:</p> <p>5. Which of the following reasons motivate you to learn new English vocabulary?</p> <p>a) The methodology used by the teacher () b) The material used during the class () c) The learning environment () d) Others (specify) ()</p> <hr/>	<p>10. Do you use the learned words in other skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing?</p> <p>Yes () No ()</p>

THANK YOU SO MUCH!



Annex 2. Teachers' Interview

**UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
TITULACIÓN DE INGLÉS
TEACHERS' INTERVIEW**

Objective: The Objective of this interview is to collect information to determine your perception on learning-teaching vocabulary in English language.

Please, answer the following questions.

1. Do you have positive perceptions toward vocabulary instruction? Explain them, please.

() Yes () No

2. Which strategies or techniques do you use to make students understand the meaning of a new word?

Choose more than one answer:

3. Which materials do you use to teach new words?

- () Flash cards
() Pictures
() Dictionaries
() Textbooks

Others: (specify)

Why do you prefer these types of materials?

4. Do you like to start your English classes by motivating learners to acquire new words? Explain it please.

5. In your own words. Is vocabulary implemented in other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing?

Thank you very much!



Annex 3. Observation Checklist

STUDENT PROGRAM OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

Evaluator: _____

Language: _____

Topic: _____

Teachers' and Students' Perceptions about Vocabulary Instruction in the EFL classroom: A case study in the South Region of Ecuador

N°	Vocabulary use and medium of Instruction	Clearly Evident	Somewhat Evident	Not Evident	Comments:
1	The teacher starts the class by motivating learners to learn new words.				
2	The teacher provides clear and explicit meaning instruction for learners understand words.				
3	Vocabulary is implemented in other skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing				
4	The teacher makes learners understand the meaning of words by context or visually.				
5	The teacher is active sharing new words in the class.				
6	Learners make use of dictionaries.				
7	The teacher uses interesting material to teach words.				
8	The use of appropriate strategies are evident at the moment of vocabulary teaching.				
9	Learners show motivation by learning vocabulary.				
10	Are vocabulary lessons interesting?				

Suggestions:
