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USING GAMES TO IMPROVE VOCABULARY IN AN INTERMEDIATE LEVEL COURSE

TRABAJO EN LA MODALIDAD DE ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract

Vocabulary is one, if not the key element that enables communication between individuals. The larger the lexicon a person possesses, the greater fluency s/he will have and, as a matter of fact, the person will be able to express his/her ideas in a better and more understandable way. In second language learning, vocabulary presented with visuals and fun activities has proved to be better processed by the learner and stored in the long term memory for later use. Thus, in the present study, games were used to rehearse vocabulary in a group of English students with a lower intermediate level.

This study was carried out in two stages. First, a vocabulary problem was identified and verified following observations and an exploratory research. Then, an action plan was designed based on games that would help the participants of the study to rehearse their vocabulary. Moreover, this inquiry aided to understand the extent to which the games chosen for this purpose were a feasible alternative to rehearse and improve students’ vocabulary. Additionally, the results from this study produced a panorama of the preferences students had in accordance with vocabulary studying and rehearsing techniques.
Key words
vocabulary, second language learning, games, foreign language, visuals, connectionism, context, improvement.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Map of Research Report
This action research paper is structured in the following way: the present chapter deals with the context in which the study was carried out. In this section, details about the place where the action research was conducted, the nature of the curriculum taught, and the participants are described. Furthermore insights into the phenomenon under study, the objectives and research questions are included. Chapter two contains the theoretical framework and the previous studies in the field of vocabulary as well as an examination of the theory that supports the strategies chosen to carry out the action plan. Chapter three describes the methodology followed to carry out the study. This includes the initial research, the action plan designed and its implementation, as well as how it was evaluated. In chapter four, a thorough analysis of the results is presented. Finally, chapter five focuses on a discussion regarding the results, and their implications, as well as the limitations of the study. The chapter ends with some proposals for further research, and personal reflections.

Context
The present study is circumscribed under the area of English vocabulary instruction. Its aim is to investigate whether certain games (defined and explained further on) may be a good aid at rehearsing and improving vocabulary knowledge with adult learners. Fun games in the classroom are proved to be a reliable alternative to study vocabulary, for this reason, it is possible that they could also be a trustworthy aid to rehearse and improve vocabulary in adult learners.

This study was conducted in a private language school in the city of Xalapa, Mexico in an English intermediate-level group of eight students. At the language school where the study was conducted, vocabulary instruction constitutes one of the pillars of the curriculum. The main objective of the institution is to have students communicating in English efficiently both, in spoken and written form, however, this study is focused only in the spoken vocabulary outcomes since the participants in
the present study did not present weaknesses in their written skills (this last point, according to their grades).

At the language school where the study was conducted, the students took English lessons designed based on a series of methodologies applied by the teachers. The lessons were planned according to the topics on the course-book and the students’ learning skills. Month by month, students were evaluated in order for them to ‘pass’ the level taught. Furthermore, at the end of the month, due to the organization of the institution, students would switch to a new teacher and continue with the contents of their books. Based on the teacher/researcher’s experience working in such institution, and relying on comments made by students in class, it became evident that lessons could be improved by addressing the areas of students’ major weakness. As to the participants of this study, vocabulary was the area that needed improvement.

The curriculum was organized in the following way:

- Depending on the knowledge of English that the student had before taking the lessons, an examiner would determine whether or not that student needed to take a four-month introductory course based on the Cambridge Intro level course-book.
- If the student had notions of the language, s/he would start with the Cambridge Basic level course-book which would take four months to be completed.
- After that, the achieving students would continue their studies with the Cambridge Intermediate course-book.
- If students finished that course, they moved to the following level called pre-advanced which again, followed the contents of Cambridge Pre-Advanced course-book.
- From then on, achieving students studied two advanced levels following the Cambridge Passages Series course-book; one for the Advanced level and another one for the Upper Advanced level.
• Finally, at the end of that curriculum there was a preparation course for the TOEFL paper based test.

A highly important aspect to mention is that the number of dropouts from the institution was constant due to students’ personal reasons. Similarly, other students would be integrated into the existing groups making the number of students per group a variable quantity.

**Participants**
The eight participants for this study were Mexican students. During the time of this project, the eight of them were my students. Their ages varied from 14 to 30. They came from very different backgrounds and academic fields. The youngest participants were currently studying high school whereas the older participants were working in different fields such as engineering, dentistry and education among others. Most of the participants in this study had some notions of the English language. However, although this group of participants were attending the intermediate level course at this institution; they appeared to be underachievers in English. This was perhaps surprising given that the participants who were currently studying high school had been attending English classes for a period of approximately four years, while the participants who were studying at university level had previously been studying English for a period of approximately six years. Furthermore, the participants who were currently working, commented that they had little knowledge of English before taking the course.

**Description of the Problem**
According to different authors such as Schmith (2000), an intermediate level EFL student should handle a range of approximately 2000 words. Furthermore, as defined by the Common European Framework (from now on CEFR), an intermediate level student should know:
...enough vocabulary knowledge to express him/herself in common situations on most topics related to their everyday lives concerning family, hobbies, interests, work, travel and current events (CEFR, 2014, p. 121)

In addition, the CEFR discusses and defines lexical competence as “knowledge of, and ability to use, the vocabulary of a language, that consists of lexical elements and grammatical elements” (2014, p 119). Among these lexical elements, we can find four:

1) the fixed expressions as sentential formulae (for instance greetings);
2) phrasal idioms such as “frozen metaphors”;
3) fixed frames which are chunks of language learned as a whole and;
4) fixed collocations which consist of words regularly used together (CEFR, 2014, pp. 119-120)

However, although theory states that intermediate level students should be able to handle these elements; the teacher/researcher observed during class that although these students were able to express their ideas clearly in written form, they could not do so orally. In addition, after carrying out initial research, it was identified that the participants in this study were still at the threshold stage and so lacked sufficient vocabulary knowledge to be able to handle the necessary required elements that compose the intermediate language learning level.

**Objectives**

Owing to the problem identified, the purpose of this study was to implement and evaluate an action plan to improve the spoken vocabulary knowledge of these EFL students. To this end, five games were chosen to carry out the implementation. The main objective of this study was to improve vocabulary production and foster fluency in students.

During the period of observations which took place one month previous to the implementation, the teacher/researcher noticed that students got bored easily and forgot vocabulary. Promoting communication via fun activities as games, would bring
about the expected results the institution focused on which were: the development of communicative competences (oral mainly) and the creation of a good learning atmosphere.

**Research Questions**

1. To what extent may games help students to improve their lexicon?
2. Do the participants of this project rely on any strategies to rehearse their vocabulary?
Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction
In this section, the theories and studies that will constitute the basis of the present project can be found. It begins with insights into the notion that there is an ideal amount of vocabulary knowledge that real intermediate EFL students should possess. Furthermore, the history of games for educational purposes is commented.

Ideal vocabulary knowledge for an intermediate level EFL student
The development of lexicon in second language students represents a challenge at the early stages of their learning process. According to Schmitt (2000), real intermediate EFL students should possess a lexicon of 2000 words approximately (p. 142.) Such modest vocabulary would enable EFL students to start communicating in English clearly. However, the fact that a student might study an “intermediate level” at a language institution does not guarantee that s/he will handle such a lexicon.

According to Nation and Warring (1997), underachieving English students would ideally handle a range of word families instead of isolated vocabulary items. Word families as mentioned by Nation and Warring “usually hold the root word and the many possible inflections of it together with its common derivatives” (in Schmitt, 2000, p. 2). A native English speaker university student is said by Nation & Waring (1997) to be able to handle a number of 20,000 word families since they add approximately 1,000 word families to their vocabulary year by year through their academic life (Schmitt, 2000, p. 3). In the case of an EFL learner, increasing his/her vocabulary that much may require a lot of effort and immersion in the language.

What does it take to know a word?
Knowing a word is a complex task that is achieved through time and lots of effort by the learners. There are two categories of knowledge of a word that can be traced in learners with ease: “receptive knowledge and productive knowledge”. The first term
as mentioned by Schmitt (2000, p. 4) refers to that knowledge of concepts we have and we know, but that cannot be expressed easily since we need a stimulus to activate it (for example listening and recognizing a word in a famous singer’s song). The second term, productive knowledge has to do with all those concepts that we are able to use and apply in different situations to clearly express our ideas.

From the elements a person needs to know regarding a word, in his book Teaching and Learning Vocabulary, Nation (1990, p. 31) suggests different types of knowledge that people need to possess in order to know a word, these types are:

...the meaning of the word, the written form of it, its spoken form, its grammatical behavior, the collocations of this word, its register, the associations of it and finally the frequency of this word.

When thinking of an EFL student, it may be argued that handling and mastering all these aspects may be a process that could take him or her a long time and also language knowledge. As Read (2000) mentions:

Learners need to know a lot about the vocabulary, grammar, sound system and spelling of the target language, but they also need to be able to draw on that knowledge effectively for communicative purposes under normal time constraints (p. 5)

What most authors agree, is that extensive reading is the best way to learn and improve vocabulary. Based on this idea, Nation (2001) suggests certain graded-reader texts called Bookworms. Such books contain vocabulary that is easy to understand according to the proficiency in English the learner has. For instance, as we can observe in the following chart, beginners in English, whose vocabulary is basic, would preferably read level one and two books. Those learners with a stronger vocabulary should be able to read more complex texts from levels 4 up to 7. Each of those bookworms contain words that learners know called “cumulative words” and new words that they may learn within the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>New words</th>
<th>Cumulative words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Words Used</td>
<td>Type-Token Ratios</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Nation, 2001, p. 163)

Chart: 1 Nation’s bookworms-level list

When learning vocabulary, not only the presentation of new items is necessary, the learner also needs to go through a period of experimentation. During this period, the new vocabulary items are used until the learner can store them, and use them in the appropriate contexts. In contrast with vocabulary learned through reading, spoken discourse is said to have mostly frequent words and lower type-token ratios (Schmidt, 2000). This means that the words students are capable of using at the beginning levels of proficiency tend to be of common use in spoken discourse, but of occasional use in written discourse.

**Classification of Words**

Nation (2001) suggests that stating an ideal number of words that should be known by a native speaker is quite subjective since there is no easy way to define how many words native speakers handle on a regular basis. The vocabulary that is used in everyday lives can be categorized in different ways. If we count the number of words that a student is able to produce then we might be talking about ‘tokens’ which are just the occurrences of words within the same sentence or statement made. Now if we are more specific and count only the non-repeated words a person says or writes, then we would be talking about ‘types’ and finally, if we count the words even though they might be the same word in its inflected forms, we would be talking about ‘lemmas’ (Nation, 2001 p. 7).

Continuing with the categorization of words, there are two types that are of special interest for this research paper: the ‘high-frequency words’ (HFW) and the ‘low-frequency words’ (LFW). The HFW category refers to words that tend to occur
constantly in texts and the LFW words that do not appear constantly. The vocabulary assessed in the present research contains both types of words such as ‘uncle’ (HFW) and ‘volcano’ (LFW). These classification of words are to be found in K12Reader (2008). Even though the words presented in this research might not belong to the HFW category, Schmitt mentions that learning them depends on the context in which we are immersed (2001, p. 16).

Traditional ways to teach vocabulary

When teaching vocabulary some teachers tend to rely on the traditional methodologies to introduce new vocabulary such as making lists, translating the words or giving examples of them in the L1. However, both teachers and students need to go beyond the traditional ways in order to cope with those moments of boredom produced by studying with vocabulary lists or language transfer since they do not give opportunity to the learner to interact with the words and familiarize with its uses. Furthermore, the short exposure students have to the language in the classroom also gives way to a lack of understanding of the vocabulary seen in the lesson. For these reasons Read (2012) suggests a substantial component of vocabulary in order to have re-encounters with words and remember them.

Some of the most traditional methods to teach vocabulary involve: extensive reading, presenting items (words) in isolation from the text, using dictionaries to look up meanings of words, using thesauruses, making word associations or checking on glossaries. From these traditional methods, those concerning active participation from the learner to find out meanings tend to end up in incidental learning of words but, this does not guarantee that the learners will discover the correct meaning of the words (Koren, 1999). As a possible result of this, students might feel overwhelmed by the amount of new items they have to remember.
Evolution of vocabulary instruction

Vocabulary instruction has evolved through the years, always incorporating more meaningful ways of instruction in order to be better remembered by students. As Coady and Huckin (1997) summarize, vocabulary instruction has undergone a long process of evolution in which more attention has been focused on other areas of the language rather than vocabulary instruction itself. For instance, in the Translation Method, widely popular in the twentieth century, vocabulary was a mere means to achieve the main goal of passing standardized exams in Latin and Greek since they were considered the intellectual languages (Howatt, 1984; Rivers, 1981).

Later on, as challenges and criticism reached its maximum level, the Translation Method ran its course giving way to the Reform Movement predominant of the 1920s. This last method created by the English linguist Henry Sweet proposed a more holistic approach to the language by separating it into the language components as phonetics, grammar and vocabulary. In this method the way vocabulary was viewed was more integral since learners used to study it in context and more in depth.

What followed the Reform Movement, till the present day were methodologies attempting to look for more meaningful ways of teaching the language and providing with a more realistic exposure to vocabulary. First the Direct method developed at the end of the nineteenth century looked for interaction that could lead to acquisition of the target language. This method which was made popular by Berlitz looked at words in a more detailed way since they gave importance to how the learner would make a real connection between the meaning and the word (Zimmerman, 1997).

In the decades of the 1920s and 1930s, special attention was put to vocabulary with the introduction of The Reading Method in the United States and the Situational Language Teaching in Great Britain. At that time, in the U.S. the Coleman report addressed serious deficiencies that American students had in their reading skills (Rivers, 1981) whereas in Great Britain Michael West stressed the importance of vocabulary improvement that would lead to reading improvement. The reason why West (1930) was the most concerned was because in his perspective, students were
not “fully mastering” the words taught to them (p. 511). By creating word-frequency lists, West provided English vocabulary instruction with a very powerful tool and reference framework that is still widely used nowadays.

Besides being an outstanding methodology to teach vocabulary, the Situational Language Teaching was the first methodology in which its creators and later developers worked on the improvement of vocabulary selection. There was an emphasis on creating scientific and rational based selections of vocabulary content for the language courses (Zimmerman, 1997, pp. 10). Following with the history of vocabulary instruction, in 1945 the Audio Lingual Method was developed by American linguists, there, what happened to vocabulary instruction was that, as Wilga Rivers said in her 1968 book “Teaching Foreign Language Skills”, students got the wrong impression that by knowing plenty of words, they would be able to communicate efficiently in the target language.

Again, new changes needed to be made towards language instruction with a higher emphasis on the development of communicative skills. That is how the Communicative Language Teaching emerged. First, what triggered the creation of this methodology was a reaction by Dell Hymes (1972) towards Noam Chomsky’s (1957) theory that language was represented in the speaker’s mental grammar by an abstract set of rules reflected in a speaker’s conscious beliefs and statements about the use of language rather that in the unconscious ones (Chomsky, 1965).

A final attempt to design the ultimate language teaching methodology came with the Natural approach defined by Krashen and Terrell (1983) as a methodology designed to enable beginner students of English to reach an acceptable level of oral communicative ability in the language classroom. The interesting point to highlight about the natural approach is that it gave vocabulary the importance that would lead to more dynamic ways of teaching since it gave a remarkable emphasis to the nature with which humans learn a language. Nevertheless it only focused on making learners communicate with oral commands in simple ways. In the cases where students wanted to go beyond the basic structures, Krashen (1989) suggested reading as the best way to acquire new vocabulary.
The introduction of games in vocabulary instruction and their benefits

Nowadays despite the fact that vocabulary has not received the emphasis it deserves in terms of research, methodology and most importantly in the classroom, there have been attempts to improve vocabulary instruction by making lessons more dynamic. One of the most dynamic ways of teaching vocabulary nowadays includes using games. The use of them dates back to the eighteen century when gaming and simulations started taking place in military training in order to develop war simulations which are still widely used till our present day. The second educational field in which games and simulations were used was in businesses in the late 1950s. The main purpose for using games and simulations was to make a bridge between the real business world and academic instruction and then, in 1956 the American Business Association produced the first business game, followed by Harvard and other outstanding business schools around the world. However it was not until the 1960s that games and simulations started to be included in other fields of education. First, they were used for teacher training and the instruction of sciences and then games and simulations continued spreading to other fields of education (Ellington, Gordon & Fowlie. 2013, pp 10-11).

Today games in the second language classroom are amongst the most remarkable types of activities that can be used to provide an authentic space to make use of the language. As defined by Byrne (1995) games are a form of play governed by rules. On the one hand, when playing games students not only have fun, become excited and interact with their peers, but also by using games in the classroom students are able to put their language skills into practice since effective communication will be the key in order to win. On the other hand with games, teachers have a powerful tool since they trigger students’ interest in the language without them being aware. Moreover, when playing games teachers can also promote an improvement of students’ skills, particularly those which have to do with communication (listening and speaking) because, as Hadfield (1990) suggests, games provide students with concentrated practice such as traditional drills, but with the difference that the communication tends to be real and serve as a bridge between the classroom and the real world.
However, what can usually be found in language classrooms are teachers who tend to ignore games arguing that they constitute a waste of time. In response to this, Hadfield (1990) also mentions that games should be considered in the language syllabus, and not only as an extra activity implemented on rare occasions to amuse students or waste time. If games are looked from different points of view, they are mostly beneficial in the improvement of students' language skills for the reasons mentioned above. Furthermore, they can motivate students to improve in areas of the language they are not confident in or in which they feel the most insecure.
Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, a description of the process of design and implementation of the project is presented. To begin with, an insight into the rationale behind the type of research chosen is found. Following by a description of the process of identification and verification of the problem, action plan design and its application.

Research Design

Action research was chosen as the ideal type of study to conduct owing to the nature of the problem. Action research, as Lewin (1946) mentions is “research leading to social action” (cited in Burns, 2005, p.3) Ross (cited in Burns, 1999, p.7) defines it as follows

...action research is a powerful form of staff development because it is practice to theory rather than theory to practice. Teachers are encouraged to reach their own solutions and conclusions and this is far more attractive and has more impact than being presented with ideals which cannot be attained.

Since teachers are in charge of providing solutions to the problems found in their contexts; they also become researchers.

Action research follows different stages which depend greatly on the nature of the problem addressed. In this study, the first cycle of AR proposed by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (cited in Koshy, 2005, pp. 3-5) was followed. They suggest (Chart 2) to plan a change, act and observe the process and its consequences, reflect on them to re-plan and act and observe again in order to come up with new reflections in case the process needs to be repeated.

Chart: 2 Kemmis and Mc Taggart’s AR cycles
Identifying and Understanding the Problem
During a period of one month before the initial research was applied, the researcher identified that most of the 8 participants of this study did not feel confident when performing speaking activities. In contrast, in their written exercises they performed appropriately corresponding to their level. At time the present study took place, the participants were studying the last units of the “Basic level” (according to the school curriculum) which means that they were still at a beginning stage in their learning process. As a result, it could be inferred that lack of vocabulary was the reason for their poor performance in the speaking activities.

By taking field notes, lack of confidence in speaking activities and mastery of vocabulary were found to be the most present issues to work on. Classroom commands as “How do you say…. In English?” used to be of frequent use by students in all lessons and code switching from English to Spanish was also used with high frequency at that stage. Since students were evaluated weekly on their performance, especially in the productive areas which involve speaking, students tended to feel frustrated due to their poor performance in that skill.

Data Collection Techniques & Verification of Data
Pictures are a valuable aid in the language classroom since as Hill (1990) mentions, they bring images from the real world into the unreal world of the classroom, though they cannot illustrate everything because even “pictures have their limitations” (McCarthy, 1992, p.115). During the previous month when observations took place, the researcher noticed students relying more on visuals than on mere theory. Another presentation preferred by students was the translation of words, however, when words were translated for them, they used to forget them more easily. Owing to this reason, it was decided that a suitable instrument to collect information during the initial research would be a picture collage.

Each month, at the end of courses students took a final exam from which teachers drew an overall conclusion of students’ performance based on the grades assigned during the four weeks of the month in which aspects as: pronunciation, vocabulary,
grammar, fluency and participation plus an examination of their writing and speaking skills were taken into account. Despite the fact that vocabulary assessment did not require a thorough examination, the teacher-researcher decided to incorporate the picture analysis (collage) as part of the examination. The researcher made it clear to students that the possible outcomes of their participation in that particular exercise would not affect their final grade.

In comparison with the design of the games for the implementation which will be presented later on this paperwork, the initial research instrument contained simple pictures easy to understand with the purpose of having students analyzing something which was easy to be remembered and stored for later use in life.

**Outcome of the Initial Research**

To analyze the results obtained from the picture, it was decided to make a word count in order to obtain a framework of the words students knew already and the ones they did not remember.

The picture collage used to assess the participants contained a number of 65 words (tokens) which had been previously taught to students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mountain</th>
<th>Hot dog</th>
<th>Beach</th>
<th>Banana</th>
<th>Shirt</th>
<th>Nurse</th>
<th>Grandfather</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>river</td>
<td>Hamburger</td>
<td>Ball</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>t-shirt</td>
<td>Police man/police officer</td>
<td>Grandmother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waterfall</td>
<td>Pizza</td>
<td>Summer</td>
<td>Fish</td>
<td>Shorts</td>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volcano</td>
<td>Ice cream</td>
<td>Umbrella</td>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Star</td>
<td>Mushrooms</td>
<td>Jacket</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island</td>
<td>soda</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>Underwear</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit card</td>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>Apple</td>
<td>Coat</td>
<td>Doctor</td>
<td>Photographer</td>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debit card</td>
<td>ocean</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>Socks</td>
<td>architect</td>
<td>Engineer</td>
<td>Brother</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Onion</th>
<th>sweater</th>
<th>Sister</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strawberry</td>
<td>blouse</td>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>Son</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carrot</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandwich</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart: 3 Words studied in class previous to the implementation (65 words)
A reliable and practical method of analysis that would help the researcher to obtain results from the initial research applied was a word count. By simply checking how many words students knew in comparison to the total amount of target words in the collage, the researcher was able to arrive at a clear conclusion and identify the items that needed to be rehearsed during the implementation phase.

The participants of the study, as we mentioned previously, were given the instruction of mentioning the tokens they knew from the collage. After asking each one, the results were type scripted. From the 8 students who took part in the initial research, the following results were obtained:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Words identified by Ss</th>
<th>Expected outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fedra</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlene</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheyla</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarai</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yozabet</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samantha</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yarelli</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judith</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 4 (In blue) Number of tokens identified by the participants from the collage during initial research

Chart 5 (In numbers) Tokens identified by the participants from the collage during initial research
As it can be seen on the graph, most students, yet not all of them got low scores. Starting from left to right, the first participant Fedra, was able to identify 21 tokens, Marlene was the student who got the most tokens right with a performance of 38 whereas Sheyla and Sarahi, got 27 and 28 respectively. Yozabet identified 21 tokens. Samantha who was the less proficient student in the group answered 18 as well as Yarelli who got 18 tokens right. Finally, Judith identified 20 tokens out of 65.

In the following chart, we can see how many students identified certain tokens. From left to right, the word chef, for instance, was identified by all the students (Ss) whereas the words aunt, uncle, etc. were not identified by any student.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All Ss</th>
<th>7 Ss</th>
<th>6 Ss</th>
<th>5 Ss</th>
<th>4 Ss</th>
<th>3 Ss</th>
<th>2 Ss</th>
<th>1 S</th>
<th>0 Ss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>hamburger</td>
<td>banana</td>
<td>strawberry</td>
<td>fish</td>
<td>hotdog</td>
<td>Mountain</td>
<td>river</td>
<td>onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>apple</td>
<td>pizza</td>
<td>soda</td>
<td>coffee</td>
<td>lettuce</td>
<td>credit card</td>
<td>carrot</td>
<td>socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress</td>
<td>shorts</td>
<td>ice cream</td>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>architect</td>
<td>underwear</td>
<td>sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>police man</td>
<td>jacket</td>
<td>coffee</td>
<td>fish</td>
<td>photographer</td>
<td>grandmother</td>
<td>engineer</td>
<td>Sweater</td>
<td>son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
<td>grandfather</td>
<td>mother</td>
<td>hotdog</td>
<td>father</td>
<td>beach</td>
<td>daughter</td>
<td>shirt</td>
<td>mushrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>aunt</td>
<td>mushroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>son</td>
<td>summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>umbrella</td>
<td>star</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sea</td>
<td>Debit card</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also, by analyzing the typescripts it was noticed that at that stage, students tended to confuse the pronunciation of some words or, when they did not know a word or wanted to confirm they were right, they used to ask the teacher or code-switch. An example of this can be seen in the following extract:

T: So, let’s start. What can you see in this picture?

S: m... is the place? The waterfall?

T: (nods)

S: amm... /volkin/ amm... the ocean?

T: yes. And what can you see here?
S: mmm… (6s) tarjet (overlap)  
T: you don’t know?  (overlap)  
F: m.. I don’t know “tarjeta” in English

What can be understood from the responses of students found in the initial research is that some of the words that were not recognized correspond to those categorized as Low Frequency Words in Chapter 2. On the other hand, words like banana, strawberry, hamburger, cheese and policeman were constantly identified in students’ responses despite the fact that not all of them are considered Highly Frequent Words. In the following chart, some words that were used in this research can be found. According to the website K12Reader, they belong to the 1000 most frequent words in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequent words in the English Language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart: 7 K12Reader’s 1000 most frequent words in English

After analyzing students’ responses we can conclude that words, despite being categorized as Highly Frequent do not precisely have to be recognized by students at the beginning level of proficiency. The context in which students are immersed defines which words will be more useful. Another factor that defines which words could be easily recognized is the similarity between students’ mother tongue and
English as it is the case of the words: chef, hamburger and police man/officer, for instance.

In the case of the words marked with low scores, despite the fact that they were not recognized, they do not belong to the HFW list. An explanation for this is the fact that those words constitute the basis for building up vocabulary in the English language from the perspective of a speaker whose mother tongue is not English.

**Rationale for the selection of games and action plan design**

There are many ways to teach vocabulary, from active methods involving Total Physical Response to others in which students sit passively as word lists. In the institution where this study was carried out, effective communication and interaction are highly required to be fostered in students in order to improve the learning environment. Owing to this reason, entertaining activities such as games were considered a suitable option to achieve this project’s goal.

Since it is widely understood that games represent something meaningful in students, they can be used to provide a vivid experience of the contents that will be better remembered when they listen to, read, speak or write them (Wright, Betteridge and Buckby, 1984).

The decision of using games was taken due to the fact that games constitute a fun option to learn, and as Hedfield (1990) says that games provide as much concentrated practice as a traditional drill and more importantly, they provide an opportunity for real communication, albeit within artificially defined limits, and thus constitute a bridge between classroom and the real world. Also, based on the nature of the course they took there was a need to choose something that could promote communication in the target language as much as possible.

There were five games chosen to achieve the objectives of the present study. All of the games had a cognitive structure that would challenge students to rehearse and improve their vocabulary. The first game chosen was Jeopardy; the second game was Snakes and Ladders; the third game was a memory game, the fourth game was Charades, and the last game was The Weakest Link.
Jeopardy is a popular TV game show created by American TV host Merv Griffin which debuted on NBC on March 30th, 1964 and has till this day, been one of the most popular TV game shows in history. Its structure is simple, Jeopardy is a game in which there are 5 categories of general knowledge clues which contain 5 questions from the very same category. The game follows an organized chain of clues with assigned values from 100 points to 500 points. In the game, a participant is chosen first to pick a question so the host can read aloud the clue. Once the clue has been read, the participants have to ring-in using a hand-held signaling device. The first participant to ring-in has to provide the correct answer phrased in the form of a question, for instance:

- Clue: Name of the person who discovered America.
- Answer: Who is Christopher Columbus?
- Clue: This is the biggest country in the world.
- Answer: What is Russia?

When the contestants answer their questions correctly, they may continue selecting questions from any category they want being careful to answer their question within five seconds, if not, the points for which the contestant was providing an answer may be discounted from the points they already gained. When this happens, other participants may take the opportunity to ring-in and provide an answer. When nobody knows the answer, the host provides it and the last person to answer correctly chooses a new question. Clues are given till one participant wins the game by accumulating the biggest amount of points. In the following picture we can observe the way Jeopardy is displayed to participants.
Jeopardy became popular in classrooms due to its structure and the way the clues are presented to participants. The game is structured cognitively so participants can make inferences about the answers based on their background knowledge and the correlations made during their learning processes of words with their meanings, uses, contexts and so on.

In her 2003 research article “Classroom Jeopardy: A Winning Approach for Improving Student Assessment, Performance, and Satisfaction”, Revere tested students’ performance in class using Jeopardy to facilitate classroom assessment and integrate team-based learning with game play. In her work, she argues that such an approach allows the teacher to review contents, misunderstood concepts and clarify doubts immediately. Also, according to Revere (2003), Jeopardy helps students by self-assessing their own performance as the game is played for a period of time. It has been proven also, that students’ performance is very likely to improve when using Jeopardy.

In the present study, the game Jeopardy was used to review the words students needed practice in, since as proved in the initial research, many words which had been taught to students during their course had been forgotten. Similar to Revere’s (2003) work, students were organized to do team-work. All of them were introduced with a simple yet fun format of the Jeopardy which can observed in picture 2. Students needed to select a character from the list and then stick to the rules explained by the teacher.
Here, some changes from the original game were made according to the resources the institution had, for instance, owing to the fact that the institution lacked hand-signaling devices to play the game, the teacher/researcher asked students to raise their hands to solve the clues that were read aloud from the game. Furthermore to ensure the participation of all students, a round of questions was made in a clockwise fashion. When a team was unable to provide an answer to the clue, the others had the chance to steal the points.

The questions were organized into categories corresponding to the vocabulary examined during the initial research. Categories corresponded to family members, food, professions, and clothing and other objects reviewed as can be seen in picture 3.

![Vocabulary Jeopardy categories for the first Jeopardy played during the intervention](image)

Pic. 3 Vocabulary categories for the first Jeopardy played during the intervention

The second game implemented was a board game known as Snakes and Ladders in which the participants played individually using a dice. Each participant had to put a counter (which could be a coin, paper ball, etc.) in the starting space and then one by one roll their dice. After that, each participant moved their dice according to the dots the dice showed. When a counter fell in the box where a bottom of a ladder was then that participant had to move his counter to the top of the ladder, on the other hand, when a counter landed on the head of a snake, the participant moved down his/her counter to the tail of it. In the following picture an illustration of the board game is shown.
As can be observed from the picture above, the board game contained only 30 boxes. There, 30 clues containing target vocabulary were placed. Such clues were sorted randomly so there were easy and difficult clues in the boxes. The educational purpose of using Snakes and Ladders was to promote competition amongst students and also to make them aware of the background knowledge they had which would be useful when solving the clues. Another benefit this game had, was that students had the opportunity to put into practice their communicative skills since they needed to read aloud the clues as if they were interviewing each other.

The third game implemented was Charades (See Picture 5). Charades is a game played in groups. It is also known as “Who Am I?” In this game the participants have to make a circle and only one of them would mime or act out in a certain way so the other players can guess a word, for instance, a player could scratch his head and belly in an attempt to represent a monkey. In the game the participants can either do gestures or ask questions that may lead to the answer. To play the game, the participants need to be assigned a word or pick a word which the other players do not know. The game is played in two different ways: a) one person mimes a word and the others guess or, b) one person gets a stamp with a word stock on his/her forehead or back and has to ask as many yes/no questions as possible until s/he guesses the word.

The participants from this research followed the second method. In order to play, the students stood in a circle and one by one turned their backs to the others so they
could see the word stock on their backs. After that, the player in turn had to ask questions in order to obtain clues and guess his/her word.

Vocabulary, which Hickman, Durodola & Vaughn (2004) describe as a critical element to improve reading comprehension and fluency, has to be addressed in a way that promotes communication. Connectionism may be a result in the long run when using Charades in the classroom for vocabulary review because it helps students to make use of their own resources and again, communicative skills, and background knowledge. After using Charades, students may develop, as in the case of the previous games, an understanding of the relationship between words belonging to the same word family or different categories. Students may develop their knowledge unconsciously due to the absence of stressful activities. When students check on each other performances they provide each other with instant feedback and tips to be incorporated in their grammar.

![Pic. 5 Charades game](image)

The last game to be implemented to rehearse vocabulary was a memory game. The rules of the game are simple to understand, the participants in the game are presented with a set of cards which have an exact same pair. Once all the cards are shown to students, they are put on a table facedown so the participants cannot see what is inside each card. The cards have to be sorted in order to make students look for pairs by flipping two cards per turn. All of the participants take turns, however, when a participant finds a match, they have the opportunity to look for another match while the others wait for their turn. This last game in particular is the simplest of the four because students do not need communicate, but to remember where a card was placed. Memory games enhance students’ use of cognitive skills, they also allow
students to reflect metacognitively on words, word parts and context (Blachowics & Fisher, 2004).

Pic. 6 Memory game used in the present study

The final game played was called The Weakest Link, which was first introduced in England on August 14th, 2000 on the BBC Two, created by Fintan Coyle and Cathy Dunning. The format of this game is very similar to Jeopardy, however, it differs in the way that TWL involves the use of listening and speaking skills mostly, whereas Jeopardy is more visual. The players in this game first introduce themselves before starting the game. They briefly say their name, profession and age aloud. After that, the game starts. The first participant to be questioned is selected alphabetically. In this game there are six rounds, during each of them the players are voted off the game by the other players.

Pic. 7 TWL game

The Weakest Link is a game-show that promotes quick-thinking, and demands the use of listening and speaking skills. The game is goal oriented, meaning that all of the players have to work as a team (despite the fact that in the end one of them will be eliminated) in order to make a sum of points to accumulate for the final prize. It is a game in which the final prize is the result of the teams’ effort. All of the members
answer questions individually, but accumulate points as a group round by round to come up with a winner at the end. The winner in The Weakest Link is usually a person characterized by a sense of intelligence and wisdom. Players who do not know how to work in teams and do not make use of their cognitive skills are very likely to be voted off first.

**Action Plan**

**Week 1. Date: May 23rd**

**Game: Jeopardy**

Procedure: One hour before the end of the lesson, the T introduced the game and the rules of it to the students. Once the rules had been explained to them, they got in pairs to support each other to provide the answers. The game would take no more than 50m and would have been played at the end of the class.

In the Jeopardy game that was presented to them, the categories were designed according to the vocabulary on the course book and the vocabulary items that students showed to miss in the three initial research instruments.

Objective: The objective of using jeopardy was to elicit answers from students and promote participation as well as teamwork. Since the nature of the game was spoken, the students little by little started communicating in the target language with their couples in order to win the game. The fact of having twelve participants was beneficial because of the chances to play two rounds in which the resulting winners passed to the second round where they were able to accumulate more points that counted as extra participation in their evaluations to keep on motivating them.


**Week 2. Date: May 30th**

**Game: Snakes and Ladders**

Procedure: After covering the contents from the course book, the T explained to students the rules of the game in detail. After that, students played in teams of four.
In each box of the game students found a question related to a vocabulary item, once the participant answered the question s/he could go ahead, in case the student was wrong, s/he had to go back to its original position.

Apart from that exception in which students would have to go back in case they did not answer correctly, there were no further modifications to the original format of the game.

Objective: Snakes and ladders would be the first game to be implemented due to its ease to be played and the familiarity students had with it. Snakes and ladders is a very well-known game to Mexican students so a game like this in which students feel more comfortable was the best option.

By reading the questions in each of the spaces of the game, the participants would be putting into practice their reading skills at the time that they related the vocabulary items to such descriptions by using their cognitive skills.

During the game the participants were required to avoid speaking in their mother tongue and use the target language since they needed just a couple of commands to communicate between themselves.

Material: Board game/ Dice/ Questions written in small pieces of paper/ Snakes and ladders board

**Week 3. Date: June 6th**

**Game: Charades**

Procedure: This game which is also known as “Who Am I?” consists of making the players drill as much information as possible from the other players through a series of questions which the others will answer by saying only yes or no till the person asking gets to the correct answer.

The game was played at the end of the lesson and took an estimated time of 50m.

Objective: The nature of this game is more spoken than read, so in this game the players were able to put into practice the vocabulary previously studied in the other
lessons as well as old grammatical yet simple structures. The aim of this activity was to create a link in the players’ memories between the vocabulary items and the many different elements that could be related to it.

Material: Flash cards with the vocabulary item written on/ Scotch tape.

**Week 4. Date: June 13th**

**Game: Memory Game**

Procedure: On the last hour of the class, the group was divided in pairs, in that occasion having students participating with a different person from that of the first jeopardy intervention. The instructions were the same as the first time played, but new tokens were included and mixed with tokens from past interventions.

During that session the students had a shorter period of time to answer the jeopardy. Owing to the time set, the game was more challenging for them.

Objective: The aim of this game was to have students playing with the language and making connections between the vocabulary items in the sentences and pictures on the flashcards. Also, by playing in pairs active participation was promoted as well as team work and listening skills were put into practice.

Material: Flashcards with pictures and sentences containing the vocabulary items to be reviewed.

**Week 5. Date: June 20th**

**Game: The weakest link**

Procedure: For this first evaluation session, the Weakest Link game was simulated in the classroom. The format of the original game was be followed as much as possible though a slightly larger amount of time was given to the participants to answer the questions of the game. The whole game was recorded.

All of the students played the game individually and one by one were eliminated until a student won the game.
The game contained all of the vocabulary tokens seen during the interventions as well as other tokens that students already knew, this was to make it wider and more realistic.

As in the original version, the player who won would take a prize.

Objective: The purpose of using this simulation of the Weakest Link was to put all the vocabulary rehearsed along the interventions into practice as well as incorporating familiar vocabulary to the participants.

Since the questions were recycled from previous interventions and new questions were added, the participants made use of their concept association skills.

Material: Computer/ Recorder/ Flashcards/ Audios

**Week 6. Date: June 27th**

**Activity: Evaluation with pictures and final interview**

Procedure: Students were again evaluated based on the picture they analyzed for the initial research.

After that, an interview in Spanish was conducted in order to explore students' perceptions towards the implementation with games.

Objective: To check whether they mastered the vocabulary or if there were still words unrecognizable for them after the period of the implementation.

The information from the interview would be useful to triangulate with the other results and come up with conclusions from the implementation.

Material: Collage/ Recorder/ Computer

**Implementation**

The previous action plan was implemented in the following way: Students took lessons on Saturdays only from 2pm till 7pm. After careful planning, it was decided to implement the games in the last hour of class so the contents of the lessons could be covered first.
The first week students were introduced to Jeopardy. Some of them already knew how to play the game, but for those who did not a detailed explanation was given. The game was presented with the four categories previously introduced. It is important to highlight that distractors were included in the questions. The distractors were words which students already knew. The reason for including distractors was to make students feel confident when playing the game as if they were winning. An example of a distractor included was the clue:

- This person takes care of animals
- Vet

Jeopardy was played in pairs. Students got together with the person sitting next to them and, by working together they came up with answers or doubts they had in common. It was important and enriching for them since they communicated in English when discussing and providing their answers.

The first Jeopardy implemented was played by students in a short period of time. The strongest contestants, Sarahi and Sheyla paired and provided the most correct answers until they won the game. Owing to this reason, the teacher gave the opportunity first to other students to check the clues and try to come up with answers.

During the second session in which Snakes and Ladders was played, the teacher divided the 8 students into pairs and gave them a dice and a board game with a set of questions related to the target vocabulary. There were 30 boxes in the game from start to finish. Once everything was arranged students played for a period of 50 minutes going back and forth in the boxes and asking doubts when they did not know a word or did not know how to describe it. To make sure all the students participated actively in the game, the teacher adopted the role of a monitor as he took notes and checked students' performance. The teacher encouraged them at the beginning of the game to avoid code switching and the use of dictionaries or translators to find the meaning of words. The aim of the activity was to encourage students to
communicate solely in English. In appendix 3 the complete list of clues used and words that were tested in the Snakes and Ladders game can be found.

![Students playing snakes and ladders](image)

Pic. 8 Students playing snakes and ladders

Charades was played during the third week of implementation to work on the professions. As well as in Jeopardy, in this game, students were presented with distractors to make them feel confident when playing. The professions analyzed in this game were: Engineer, Photographer, Fire fighter (‘distractor’ word), Police man, Vet (‘distractor’ word) and Nurse. The game was played focusing only on these professions. Since there were students absent that day the game took 40 minutes, and was played at the middle of the lesson to make sure students were not tired.

On the fourth week, at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher presented students the memory game as a warm up activity. For this intervention, all of the 7 students were present. However, two of them declared that they did not like the game and decided to skip it. The pictures on the memory game were similar in design to those on the initial research to continue making students familiar with the vocabulary.

During the fifth implementation, Jeopardy was played and students participated more. At that stage of the intervention, students were more familiar with some of the words. Despite that, they did forget some of the target words from time to time.

The last intervention included an overall evaluation of students' performance. For that session, the teacher made a list of clues and questions related to the vocabulary that students would review along the other phases of the intervention. The questions, as well as the clues were not exactly the same as those appeared in the five stages of implementation. The overall evaluation aimed to test how well students were able
to identify the vocabulary and make associations of information with words. Students performed under some stress since the last game played, which is called The Weakest Link (a sub-version of Jeopardy) involves timing students to give responses and complete a round of participation.

For the evaluation process of the present work, students were given a detailed explanation of the rules of the game as well as several examples to clarify any doubts. Once they agreed to start the game, the teacher read the questions on his computer and timed each round to make it as similar as possible to the real game. From the first round, it was surprising how fast they understood the format of the game since the first person to be voted off was the only male player. As the rounds went on the weakest links were voted off by the players having in some cases ties in which the strongest player in the round needed to decide who would stay and who would finish the game. The winners of this game came to be the students with the best performances during the implementation which were Sarai and Sheyla for first and second place and Marlene for the third place. During the game students, despite losing, seemed to enjoy the whole experience and were able to solve their doubts in real time since the format of the game allows that.

![Image of The Weakest Link game](image)

Pic. 9

Students also took part in two further evaluations. One that was explained already was an interview with open questions where they could provide their perceptions and opinions, likes and dislikes about the implementation. Additionally, there was a re-evaluation of their vocabulary knowledge with the same instrument from the initial
research. Finally, there was a simple picture narrative in which some elements (words) from the whole implementation were included. In the picture narrative students made use of their grammar, speaking skills and vocabulary. All of them, the interview, picture analysis and picture sequence were evaluated at the same time and took no more than 10 minutes. The questions of the final interview, as well as the picture narrative can be found in the appendix section.
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction
An analysis in the words of LeCompte and Schensul (1999) is a process in which the researcher reduces amounts of data in a story with its interpretation. The analysis takes some steps to be carried out, Patton (1987) describes three things as steps for an analysis. First the information needs to be organized, then reduced through summarization and categorization and finally, patterns and themes are identified and linked. It is possible as well to draw early conclusions by analyzing data in-the-field. LeCompte and Schensul (1999) suggest analyzing the data as soon as it emerges while the researcher is in the field and later. This early analysis includes inscription, description and transcription. In the following lines, the steps taken to carry out the analysis of the data collected is presented. The methodology followed for the analysis is presented and described and the rationale behind its selection. Furthermore, the results from the evaluation are presented and interpreted. Finally, conclusions from this chapter are drawn.

Analysis
There are various methods of analysis but due to the nature of this study, the Constant Comparative Method was chosen. CCM is a method that assigns codes that reflect the conceptual relationships (Merriam, 1998). With this method the researcher is able to identify similarities appearing though the data. After such similarities are identified, the researcher can categorize data and form sets of information coded. As Harding (2013) points out the researcher has the role of reporting findings accurately even when the information might not seem to make a big contribution, as he states, “The findings still make a contribution, albeit a small one, to knowledge about the social world” (2013, p. 112)
In her article “Data Analysis Techniques in Qualitative Research” Kawulich (2004) suggests qualities that categories emerging from the data should possess, for instance: She states that categories have to

- reflect the purpose of the research
• be exhaustive
• be mutually exclusive
• be sensitive to category content and finally,
• be conceptually congruent (Merriam, 1998)

The implementation as previously explained in detail took a period of six interventions which included the final evaluation plus two extra interviews in which the first initial instruments were tested again in order to check if students had really improved in that area. The method used for the evaluation of the implementation was summative with formative parts, this means that some of the instruments used actually helped to assess students’ lexis and make them reflect on the areas they could improve on.

Similar to the initial research, in this section a constant comparative methodology was used to analyze the information gathered from the simulation of the Weakest Link game, the picture sequence, the collage, the interviews and finally the field notes. As Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007) mention, “the constant comparative method was used in its beginnings to analyze data collected in a series of rounds, but with time, it also turned out to be useful to analyze data collected in a single round of interviews” (p. 565.) In our case, the interviews were performed in a single round.

While other methodologies are strict to a single way of analyzing the data, the constant comparative method can help to identify patterns or “codes” as Miles and Huberman (1994), and Ryan and Bernard (2000) define them. Such codes may emerge in different ways. Whereas Ryan and Bernard identify three types of codes: deductively (were the codes are identified previous to the analysis and then found in the data), inductively (were the codes emerge from the actual data), and abductively (were codes emerge iteratively), Gibson & Brown (2010) define only two types named “Apriori codes (created to reflect categories that are already of interest before the research has begun) and empirical codes (derived while reading through the data)” (in Harding, 2013, p. 94) In the present work the second terminology is
followed. In the following chart, some of the codes which emerged apriori can be observed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most of the words were addressed in the final evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Lack of attendance when implementation was carried out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Interruptions from other students in turn taking activities may affect students’ performance or make them feel insecure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short time for the implementation</td>
<td>Distraction avoids students’ improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games helped students to learn.</td>
<td>Limiting the amount of time students’ had to provide an answer while playing may have led to confusion or anxiety from the students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection is triggered.</td>
<td>Question structure in the last evaluation (The Weakest Link) might have represented a challenge to students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 7. Apriori codes obtained from the data collected

During the examination with TWL, some students showed anxiety when being asked questions since they thought their performance in the game would affect their final note on the course, however, it was explained to them that the outcomes of the game would not be taken into account.

Other codes that emerged deductively had to do with students’ learning skills. Some of them justified their performance by saying that English represents a big challenge. Students found the course challenging due to the amount of information they had to learn in a rather short period of time because each month they would be introduced to new units of content and vocabulary.
**Final outcome from the different instruments**

As it was discussed a little earlier, the first instrument used for the initial research was also used for the evaluation in order to know if students had mastered the words rehearsed or if they still had doubts. The analysis method followed was also the same as in the initial research (a word count) to see how many students identified certain tokens.

It is very important to highlight that here a sample of the complete number of students is presented since, three of them were not present at the very end of the research owing to the fact they quit school and one of them was incorporated to the group once the initial research had been applied. In the following chart the improvement students had from the initial research until the final evaluation can be observed. First, the results from the instruments are presented separately and then a contrast of information is presented following the CCM.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Initial outcome Of words</th>
<th>Final outcome Of words</th>
<th>Words Expected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fedra</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marlene</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheyla</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarai</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yozabet</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 8. Comparison between Ss’ results at the beginning and at the end of the implementation

During the initial research, Fedra recognized 21 tokens whereas in the last evaluation she recognized 40. Marlene who recognized the most tokens during the initial research, improved recognizing 38 first and then 45. Sheyla, the student with one of the best performances identified 27 tokens in the initial research and 37 in the final evaluation. Continuing with Sarai, the student with the best overall performance in the group (meaning the four skills) identified 28 tokens during the initial research and 59 in the last evaluation. Finally, Yozabet, who had one the lowest performances during the initial research identified 28 tokens at first and only
30 in the last evaluation. In the following graph the results described above are presented in comparison with the expected outcome.

Additional to the improvement of students' lexicon, two categories of words were also identified, those that were poorly recognized at the beginning of the research and those that became more frequent. In the following chart (chart 10), a significant change in the recognition of word appearances can be observed. The least recognized words were those indicated with a 0 on the chart below. Words such as eggs, t-shirt, mountain, ice cream, potatoes, credit card and nurse presented were recognized by 3 students in the initial research and by 4 in the final outcome. Carrot and underwear were first identified by 2 students out of 8 and then by 2 students out of five. Other words that were better recalled were: socks, son, daughter, ball, umbrella, and engineer. However there were also words which did not present an improvement such as onion, summer, star and ocean. These words preserved the same frequency of recognizance by students. Those early results can help to draw a positive panorama of the results from the intervention as it shows how words which were unfamiliar to the participants became more common.
Chart. 10 Complete list of words from the implementation where, the vocabulary on the left was recognized by all the participants and that on the right by nobody.

From the words presented above, hamburger, pizza, hotdog and sandwich were not considered relevant since they are well recognized in Spanish. The main interest of this study relies on those words that had no similarities with Spanish. Furthermore, focus was put on words that were not easily recognized due to factors having to do with coined words coming from English or words that had become known to Spanish speakers due to globalized brands.

Last but not least, there is an extra point to highlight with respect to the outcome of the collage analysis. It was identified that students incorporated words related to the picture that were not examined but were in fact, taught prior to the implementation. To exemplify this, it can be observed that in Sarahi’s final analysis of the she added extra definitions to some of the pictures:

As it can be noticed, there are words highlighted which were not part of the picture nor expected in the outcome. These words that the student incorporated were also taught in the units prior to the implementation. The description provided by Sarahi shows clearly her capacity to expand her lexis and provide more details about her perception of the picture.

The next data collection instrument to be presented is an interview in which the focus was to explore students’ perceptions of the implementation, as well as identifying any variables that may have represented a negative effect on students’ performances. To analyze the data, the responses provided were gathered and then some categories which reflected patterns were developed. The first question asked to students was focused on exploring students’ perception on their self-evaluation of improvement from the beginning levels at the language school till the moment of the interview. For instance:

Teacher: ¿Cómo sientes que has mejorado respecto a tu nivel de inglés desde el nivel básico al actual?
Fedra: Pues siento que si he mejorado bastante aunque siento que todavía me falta mucho.

Teacher: “How much do you think you have improved in English from the basic level till this one?
Fedra: Well, I think that I’ve improved a lot though I still feel like I need to study more.”

From the five students interviewed, four argued having improved “a lot” from the beginning level to the intermediate. Then, the second question aimed to explore the skills students consider to be the most challenging for them in which again, four out of five recognized ‘speaking’ as the most challenging skill due to vocabulary, pronunciation and fluency of the interlocutor, and lack of practice with other speakers.

Teacher: ¿Cuál es la habilidad que consideras más difícil en inglés y que representa un reto para ti?
Marlene: Listening and speaking.
Teacher: ¿Qué crees que sea lo que origina que tengas dificultad en esa área?
Fedra: Listening porque siento que muchas palabras se confunden o se pronuncian igual o sea se hacen más pequeñas y entonces eso me confunde, su pronunciación. Y hablar me es difícil porque no sé, se mezclan un tiempo, se mezclan como que palabras. No sé, la forma de organizar cada palabra siento que tengo que tenerla siempre presente para poder formular una oración.

Teacher: “Which is the skill you consider to be the most difficult which represents a challenge for you?
Fedra: Listening and speaking
Teacher: What do you think is the cause of your struggle in that area?
Fedra: Listening because I think that many words can be confused or are pronounced the same, I mean they turn shorter then, that confuses me, their pronunciation. And speaking is difficult because, I don’t know, the tenses are mixed up, words are mixed up. I don’t know, the way each word is organized. I feel like I have to keep the word in mind so I can make a sentence.”

Additionally, question 4 asked: How they considered their own performance in the area of vocabulary; results indicated most of them felt like they were “regular” and “needed improvement”. Some of the reasons students may present poor performances are, as Duckworth and Selingman (2005) highlight, students’ study habits and self-discipline. On question five, students were asked about their study habits and most of them admitted not having any study habit besides listening to music. From the five students interviewed, only the two with the lowest performances admitted making use of notes, pictures, dictionaries and translators in order to figure out the meaning of words and trying to remember them for later use. As well, on question six, they were asked for any strategies to review vocabulary. The results showed a divided opinion, whereas three of them said they took notes on the words and made sentences and related them with pictures or other words to practice them, the two students with the strongest vocabulary, being Sarahi and Marlene said they did not use any strategy to review vocabulary besides listening to music and singing aloud the lyrics (“- Marlene: Practicando la canción en mi mente y repasando lo que
Strategies students considered useful to review vocabulary besides those they put into practice were listening to music, and making relationships between word-concept-image-context, translating into Spanish and trying to memorize them as we can see in the following extract from the typescripts:

- Marlene: practicando la canción en mi mente y repasando lo que dice hasta que se me quede la palabra/ rehearsing the song in my mind and checking it out until I memorize it.
- Sarahi: Escuchar música y cantarla/ Listening to music and singing it
- Sheyla: escribiéndolo y relacionándolo con cosas... lo relaciono con imágenes y con definiciones en español...y las relaciono definitivamente con música/ Writing it down and relating it with things... I relate it [vocabulary] with pictures and spanish definitions... and I definitely relate them [words] with music.
- Yoza: Escuchar música/ listening to music.

For reasons of further improvement of the action plan and feedback, the teacher/researcher asked about participants' perception of the games implemented and whether they thought were useful to review vocabulary. Most of them affirmed the games helped them to remember some words, however, the strongest participants (Marlene and Sarahi) said they usually opted for competitive games because they made them feel motivated to study harder whereas the other participants said competitive games made them feel stressed and anxious.

Games Helped me:
- Fedra: Si siento que me ayuda, pero como que me siento en presión/ I feel like games helped me, but I sort of feel under pressure.
- Marlene: ...para mi ver el vocabulario en imágenes es mas fácil/ to me, looking at the vocabulary in pictures is easier [to remember.]
- Sarahi: siento que te ayudan a mejorar tu pronunciación y tu vocabulario/ I feel like [games] help you to improve your pronunciation and your vocabulary.
- Sheyla: Muy bien porque fue como que yo iba recordando e iba guardando todas las palabras/ [I felt] Very good because it was like I was remembering and storing all of the words [in my mind.]
- Yozá: … en algunos juegos si me sirvió para repasar [vocabulario] y en otros no/ some games helped me to rehearse vocabulary and others did not.

Competitive games:
- Marlene: A lo mejor que fueran juegos más competitivos porque te motivan a dar más…/ Maybe more competitive games because they motivate you to give your best.
- Sarahi: …la competencia en algunas personas lo hacen a que se esfuercen más/ in some people, competition makes them try their best.
- Fedra: como que me siento en presión/ I feel under pressure.

Further information provided by students helped us understanding that pronunciation is a factor they consider interesting since, in the games played, the teacher made emphasis on the correct pronunciation of the words. Special focus was paid to the opinions given by Yozabet since she said she struggled a lot to remember words (“soy muy olvidadiza entonces cuando me ponían por ejemplo una tarjeta del memorama se me olvidaba por completo donde estaba la otra tarjeta o cómo era en español… tengo buena memoria visual, pero auditiva no…”)

The last two questions from the short interview in which students participated asked for opinions on how they felt during the process of the intervention since it is very relevant for this study to know if students considered games as a useful tool to rehearse vocabulary or if they had other preferred strategies. After analyzing the outcome of this question it was discovered that students’ perception of games was positive and helped them rehearse pronunciation. They considered games interesting the way they were presented due to the images that could be an aid in creating a connection between concepts, words and their uses. Out of the five students taking the interview, three considered them as fun and entertaining which talks about how games could also trigger interest in the language, for instance:

- Fedra: Yo creo que están bien [los juegos] / I think they’re fine [the games]
- Marlene: Me gusto más que nada por la diversión que se hizo entretenido…/ I liked it above all because of the fun we had which made it [playing] entertaining.
- Sarahi: Yo creo que así estan bien [los juegos]/ I think they’re ok just like that [the games].

Games, in the opinion of the participants were a way of distraction in which they learned without being aware, though it was found that half the group enjoyed competition and the other half did not. Having a group divided in opinion may be a reason for further careful selection of games in order to have a balance and guarantee the active participation of all the members in a group.

The data collection instrument that made students feel the most anxious yet interested and entertained was The Weakest Link. The students were voted off according to the rules of the game during the implementation, however, being voted off the game did not represent that the students were unable to produce the required vocabulary. In the game, the teacher looked mainly for patterns of behavior and a relationship between students’ performance in the previous games, the Weakest Link and the field notes taken.

From the different questions made to students, there were words identified by them easily and others that due to the way clues were structured, students struggled with. Here on Chart 11, we present the list of words recognized by students on the left side and on the right side those words difficult to identify for them at the time of the game.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Known words</th>
<th>Unknown words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. vet</td>
<td>F. jacket</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. nurse</td>
<td>J architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. river</td>
<td>sh. Cheese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. son</td>
<td>y. socks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. credit card</td>
<td>f. onion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Carrots</td>
<td>a. son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. cousins</td>
<td>m. ice cream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. lettuce</td>
<td>f. uncle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. police</td>
<td>j. dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. underwear</td>
<td>f. garlic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>y. Apple</td>
<td>m. ocean/sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. doctor</td>
<td>y. volcano</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Bread</td>
<td>m. engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. soda</td>
<td>m. coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Aunt</td>
<td>j. rainforest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. socks</td>
<td>sh. Mountain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Waterfall</td>
<td>sh. Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. grandfather</td>
<td>s. seller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. firefighter</td>
<td>sh. Beef</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. coffee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. chicken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh, shoes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. cake</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. reporter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Daughter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. swimsuit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Server</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. island</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Bananas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. volcano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sh. Teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s. strawberry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This point marks the end of this round before the final round of the game

| sh. Tennis   |             |
| s. suit      |             |
| s. tomatoes  |             |
| sh, suit     |             |
| s. beach     |             |
| s. hamburger |             |

End of the game

Chart. 11 Responses provided by the students (in the order they were provided) whilst they played TWL

The small letters on the left side of the words indicate the student who succeeded or failed at recognizing the word in the game. We can observe that most of the words used in the game were rehearsed during the intervention and also, we can notice that there were extra words taken as ‘distractors’ which were not present during the implementation, for instance suit, cake, tennis and seller.
Drawing conclusions from the different outcomes

In his book, Qualitative Data Analysis from Start to Finish (2013), Harding suggests that the Constant Comparative Method involves also a process of summarizing information gathered in the data as well as a process of coding. These processes as he states “can be employed either separately or together and they can also be used alongside (or separately from) codes” (2013, p. 90). In the following lines, an exhaustive analysis of the data collected from the four evaluation instruments is presented. The main focus was to provide a comparison of the different results obtained, verify the improvement of the participants during the implementation of the games and contrast the information with the field notes taken by the teacher/researcher.

On the first lines of the Findings section, a brief description of types of codes is included. There, codes emerged before deep analysis was performed (Apriori codes) and were registered in a brief chart. Following that, in order to continue with the analysis of all the data, in this section the empirical codes that emerged after careful analysis are presented. In order to achieve this, four basic steps were followed which consisted of:

1. Identifying initial categories based on the reading of the transcripts
2. Writing codes alongside the transcripts
3. Reviewing the list of codes, revising the list of categories and deciding which codes should appear in which category
4. Looking for themes and findings in each category (Harding, 2013, pp. 94-95)

After that, the codes that emerged from the transcripts were the following:

*Improvement:*

“My vocabulary improved greatly” – Fedra

“My vocabulary improved” – Sarahi
Recognition of study flaws:

“I still need to study more” - Yoza

“I learn through constant practice” – Marlene

Struggle with speaking because of vocabulary:

“[I struggle with speaking] because I first need to think what I want to say” – Marlene

Struggle with listening because of vocabulary:

“I feel like many words get mixed up or are pronounced the same/ I don’t know the words very well” – Fedra

Struggle with speaking because of vocabulary:

“Speaking is difficult for me because I don’t know, tenses are mixed, I mean, words are mixed” – Fedra

Techniques to improve vocabulary:

“I make associations (contextualizing) to learn vocab” – Sheyla

“I like to use music to learn vocab” – Sarahi

“I read books to learn vocab” – Sarahi

“I write down some thoughts to learn vocab” – Yoza

Vocabulary rehearsing techniques:

“I rehearse vocabulary by taking notes on top of words on the book or my notebook” – Fedra

“I associate words with things to learn vocab” – Sheyla

“I look for the word in the dictionary or the translator” – Marlene

“I feel like when you listen to the song, you’re rehearsing it [the vocabulary]” – Sarahi

“I use the method of talking to myself (monologue)” – Marlene
“I repeat what the song says until I memorize the word” – Marlene

“Another strategy is to write down words on my whiteboard and remember them and using them in my daily life” – Marlene

_**Vocabulary games help to improve English knowledge:**_

“I feel like [vocabulary games] help you to improve your pronunciation and vocabulary” / “[The games] helped me to remember and associate words in new ways”– Fedra, Sheyla

“Since they [the games] are pictures, to me looking at the vocabulary in pictures is easier” – Marlene

_**The vocabulary games used need to be improved:**_

“but I’d like a more difficult vocabulary to rehearse” – Marlene

“I liked the activity, but the time to play was short” – Sheyla

“I’d rather preferred more competitive games” – Sarahi

Taking the codes as a first step to reach more concrete results, a deeper insight into the data collected whilst in the field was taken to decipher information presented in the graphs together with responses by the participants during the interviews. In order to achieve this task, an analysis of the similarities and differences of opinion found in the interviews was given following a three step process suggested by Harding (2013). The first step to take into account consisted of making a list of the similarities and differences in the opinions of the first two participants. In the case of the present study, this issue was addressed in the order that the interviews took place, starting with the participants identified as Fedra and Marlene. The second step in the process was to add up the opinions of the other participants of the project to finally, identify the research findings once all of the opinions had been added to the list (Harding, 2013, pp.78-79)

The main concern of this study in the following list of similarities and differences was to answer the research questions. The parts of the interview which concern to both
inquiries were focused on collecting data about students’ vocabulary studying and rehearsing techniques. Furthermore, those questions addressed students’ opinion on the use of games to help them to improve their vocabulary after their participation on the project. On the following list the results are presented:

**Vocabulary learning techniques**

*Similarities*
Students make use of vocabulary learning techniques or rely on the use of other devices to learn and rehearse vocabulary.

*Differences*
Fedra, Sheyla and Yoza make word-concept associations. In addition to that Marlene uses online translators, but Fedra and Yoza printed dictionaries.

Marlene, Sarahi and Yoza listen to music and sing along the lyrics until they memorize them, but Marlene pays extra effort to it by replaying (the music) many times.

Sarahi reads books in English to learn and strengthen her vocabulary.

**Meaningfulness of games as a vocabulary learning device**

*Similarities*
Games are a helpful aid to learn and rehearse vocabulary on an easy way

*Differences*
Fedra considered competitive games to be stressful and not appropriate to rehearse vocabulary, however, for Marlene competition is what inspires students to work harder and learn faster.

Fedra and Yoza put particular emphasis on the aid that visuals had when learning vocabulary, Marlene on the difficulty of words. The harder and more challenging the words are, the better for Marlene.
Sarahi considers that games bring about new vocabulary to the lesson making it more meaningful.

Sheyla considers that, through games you can discover new ways to associate words to concepts in order to learn them, however, time plays an important role. Short games do not allow her to learn.

An aspect only mentioned by Yoza was that as long as she knows the meaning in Spanish of the word, she can make use of it, if not, she will totally forget its use in context.

To continue with the process of analysis, Gibson and Brown (in Harding, 2013, p.84) suggest interpreting the data by making use of a process to identify findings using the Constant Comparative method which involves looking for commonalities, differences and relationships though the data. A commonality, as its name suggests, is a code that appears constantly though the data provided by the participants, however identifying a commonality requires a careful analysis to verify that there are, or there are not any further subdivisions of the code, to achieve this information has to be corroborated as having the majority of answers agreeing on the same information. In this respect, Harding (2013) suggests that “if three quarters of respondents or more share an experience or a view, then it should be considered to be a commonality” (p.88):

**Commonalities:**

*The most challenging skill to the participants is speaking*

“[I struggle with speaking] because I first need to think what I want to say” – Fedra

“Speaking. I do not organize mi ideas well to talk” – Marlene

“I don’t apply it [speaking skills] with people, I apply it alone and when I apply it with people I get nervous” – Sheyla
Music helps to learn vocabulary

“It is though music and songs [how I study vocabulary] since I look at the lyrics and practice them and I look through the meaning of the words” – Marlene

“I feel like when you listen to the song you’re practicing it; [the vocabulary] if you’re singing and listening” - Sarahi

“I listen to music” - Yoza

Vocabulary-context associations help to learn it and remember it

“I associate words with things to learn vocab” – Sheyla

“Well my first technique I think is… I don’t know, associate them [words] with something, with a picture or I feel like in alphabetical order…” - Fedra

Note taking helps to learn words

“I rehearse vocabulary by taking notes on top of words on the book or my notebook” – Fedra

“I write down some thoughts to learn vocab” – Yoza

“Another strategy is to write down words on my whiteboard and remember them and using them in my daily life” – Marlene

Games help to learn and rehearse vocabulary

“I feel like [vocabulary games] help you to improve your pronunciation and vocabulary” – Fedra
“[The games] helped me to remember and associate words in new ways” - Sheyla

“…some games helped me [to rehearse vocabulary] and others didn’t” – Yoza

“Fine. I think that they [vocabulary games] help you to improve your pronunciation and your vocabulary, you have more vocabulary from the one you usually get from class only” – Sarahi

Games with visuals are better to learn vocabulary

“Since they [the games] are pictures, to me looking at the vocabulary in pictures is easier” – Marlene

“…some games helped me [to rehearse vocabulary] and others didn’t. Because I have a good visual memory…” – Yoza

“Looking at the picture I remember which word it is. I feel like it works better for me” – Fedra

Differences:

After speaking, listening was considered the most challenging skill for students, however, some students considered pronunciation to be the cause of their struggle whereas others considered vocabulary to be the reason.

Vocabulary caused struggle with listening skills for a small number of students as Fedra and Yoza. Fedra argued the following:

“listening porque siento que muchas palabras se confunden o se pronuncian igual o sea se hacen mas pequenas y entonces eso me confunde, su pronunciacion/ listening because I feel like many words get mixed up or are pronounced the same, I mean, they are pronounced shorter and that confuses me”
As it can be seen from her response, this was derived from the pronunciation of homonyms in English. Furthermore, Yoza commented:

“no sé muy bien las palabras y entonces es lo que hace, yo siento que es lo que hace que confunda palabras a la hora de escuchar/ I don’t know vocabulary very well so, that’s why, I think that’s why I confuse words when I hear them.”

Fedra, Marlene and Sheyla held similar opinions to the challenge that speaking represented for them, however, this was derived from different reasons. For Fedra sentence structure played the main role in speaking correctly; Marlene considered that people had to foresee what they wanted to say in order to organize their thoughts, but Sheyla said that improving her speaking skills was a matter of practice with people and confidence.

Students held different views of their vocabulary performance. On one hand, some of the participants thought that their vocabulary was ‘good’ due to several years of study of English, on the other hand, some students thought that they needed to study more since they had a tendency to forget words easily.

Music was used in different ways to learn vocabulary. Few students were able to recall the vocabulary only by listening, the majority of them had to either read the lyrics carefully, look for meanings or take notes.

Some students declared that they relied on note taking to rehearse their vocabulary, however, one of them stated that she only used her notebook and dictionary to clarify her doubts and write vocabulary and its meaning. Despite that, she stated that no further study was carried out in relation to those notes taken. This was interpreted from statements as the following: “I only write it (the vocabulary) down on my notebook or over the words I’m looking for and nothing else, I don’t continue studying that word.”

In relation to music, when Yoza said she listened to music she was not constant with her answer as later on she said “(I have good visual memory) but not echoic (memory.)” No other participants made statements like this.
**Group analysis**

In order to close this analysis, an overall triangulation is presented. The triangulation takes into account some of the commonalities identified, the field notes, and finally the results presented by graphs above.

First of all, to address one code which appeared constantly throughout the data having to do with a reliance on music as a tool to learn and rehearse English vocabulary. The code which states that music helps to learn vocabulary was not verified since this research was not focused on that matter, however, the fact that the majority of students who considered music a good tool, got the best overall results on this project could be related. Further research on that area would be of interest.

Participants who stated that looking up at the translation of words in dictionaries was their preferred vocabulary learning technique, were not able to prove that such technique was reliable. This assumption comes from the fact that some participants who fell under this category obtained low scores on the evaluation. Participants as Fedra, and Yozabet despite being on both ends of the spectrum, which means, having a good and a low overall performance, showed that their recognition of the target words improved differently. It was clearly stated that the purpose of this research was to make a vocabulary review for further improvement based on games, however, the fact that this vocabulary learning strategy might have played a significant role in the final outcome of the participants presented here cannot be ignored.

In comparison with the previous results, Marlene and Sheyla, other participants who also considered note taking as a reliable technique to rehearse and learn vocabulary obtained better results. The main difference in both groups was that, whereas the previous participants relied on their mother tongue to search for words, these other two participants relied solely on word-context associations. In relation to this, the other participant known as Sarahi fell out of these two categories as she relied on music and reading which is addressed below.
Another code which draws attention, which is central to this research, is that having to do with the use of games to improve vocabulary. A lot has been commented on this respect on the previous lines, but here it can be verified. On one hand, the results obtained by the participants in which there was a clear improvement on the recognition of the target words could be observed, on the second hand, the subjects of the study stated that they perceived an improvement on their vocabulary. Some questions from the final interview helped to verify this point as well as the notes taken by the teacher/researcher. According to the researcher, students seemed, during many of the sessions, to enjoy the activities. Furthermore, during the simulation of TWL, some of the participants who got dismissed first were very enthusiastic about the activity. Such students were whispering words to the players or they mentioned having seen the word previously during the time of the implementation.

Two small details which should not be ignored and might have presented a challenge to the participants in the implementation were: the fact that talkative participants as Sarahi used to whisper answers and interrupt a lot during the implementation, probably resulting in anxiety to the shy participants as Fedra and Yozabet. This was noted by the researcher and reported on the field notes. Another aspect to consider is the limited time for the implementation as one participant highlighted this point saying that “it was too short.” Further research would have to be performed to verify this information in future studies.

Finally, a code which emerged in the data indicated that the games with visuals helped students to learn vocabulary. Here is an opinion by Fedra who said that “by looking at the picture I remember the word.” Since the majority of games contained images, it could be said that this information was accurate, however, due to the limited amount of data on that aspect and also the fact that this research was not focused on that matter another research would have to be conducted to verify this information.
Chapter 5: Discussion

In this final chapter, a recapitulation of the AR process is presented, accompanied by a self-reflection of the experience that the research and the results this project reached. As Burns (2010) states “action research involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts” (2010, p.2.) In this section, I also address different authors to establish a clear panorama of the results obtained.

To start with, this study was carried out in order to solve a problem in my teaching context. The idea of proposing an approach as the one implemented here emerged after many months of observation to different groups in the institution where I worked. Once a group of students and I worked together for a longer period of time than that described in the “context and participants” section, I carried out a careful examination of the difficulties they had with English and came to the conclusion that they were struggling with fluency. By delimitating the problem and analyzing my students I decided to focus on vocabulary rehearsing. The reason for that was derived from my observations to the group and the results that they obtained during the monthly evaluation at the institution. All in all, those results helped me to understand that speaking was the weakest skill in most of the students.

As could be seen in the literature review, different authors agree that speaking is one of the most challenging skills to develop for EFL students. A very important element to achieve fluency in English is to be able to handle a range of words which would make up the basis to develop oral skills.

Once the main problem was identified, I carried out an initial research to verify that students had a real difficulty with vocabulary. The results from the initial research and the experience and observation to the group helped me to plan activities that would be enjoyable for the participants, drill as much information as possible, and provide them with a positive experience that would be easily recalled when doing speaking exercises. The main purpose of this was to help students to store and retrieve words in the target language, because, as Aitchison (1987) suggests, the
range of vocabulary an ordinary person can store seems to be a system of associations or related links. In this particular case, these would be associations between images and words.

The five games selected for the action plan were similar. Those games listed in the first chapters are said to possess a cognitive structure. The implementation of those games lasted five weeks additional to one for evaluations and the previous month of observations. The results which derived from the implementation brought other inquires addressed in the following sections.

In the end, the findings made me come to the conclusion that the research questions were satisfactorily answered. First of all, students’ results from their evaluations and interviews proved that games are and will be a very reliable tool to learn and rehearse vocabulary. As it could be observed in the final evaluation, games can help to a great extent, however, many other factors may influence the results, and as a matter of fact teachers should not rely entirely on games, but use them wisely as a very powerful learning tool.

The second research question, which had to do with the meaningfulness of games to improve vocabulary, was answered through the responses of the participants in the last interview. As it was also observed previously, all of the students felt that games were an excellent strategy to improve their lexicon, whether those games were easy or difficult, they contributed to the improvement of the vocabulary of the participants in this project.

Finally, the last research question aimed to find out about the vocabulary learning strategies that students had. The reason why this was a very important question to be asked comes from the notion that, students who do not possess vocabulary learning strategies, had a greater difficulty to remember words and a smaller lexicon. By looking at the responses from students who either relied on music, reading or note taking, it is possible to infer that learning strategies could be incorporated to their studying habits in order to obtain better results in their learning process and achieve a greater self-satisfaction from their hard work.
Conclusions and implications

The present study addressed the problem by working with pictures in most of the different parts of the project, from the initial research to the evaluation. As Carpenter and Olson (2011) mention, “Pictures are remembered better than words because they are more likely to be represented by both verbal and image codes” (2011, p.1). Sokmen (1997) points out that, when students are asked to draw on their background knowledge and their schema, they connect the new word with already possessed knowledge and a link is then created. This suggests that students could create links between words and pictures for a better access to their own lexicon. As a matter of fact, a relationship between the target words in this study with the visuals presented in the games, would have been a useful aid to improve students’ vocabulary.

An exhaustive analysis of the results obtained from the evaluation process and the interviews, showed a significant improvement in the vocabulary rehearsed with games. Such results helped to come to the conclusion that a link between the vocabulary presented in the games was established through visuals which made the rehearsing of those target words easier for students and more memorable. However, the findings section also allowed me to realize that there are other factors which are involved in improving vocabulary. Not only playing games help to improve vocabulary, but also other learning strategies that students make use of at home. Note taking, music listening and translation of words still play a very important and effective role in learning vocabulary for students.

Apart from that, the analysis of the results obtained from the picture sequence and descriptions showed that the implementation produced a side effect on students’ fluency as they were able to eloquently make statements in which they described the pictures for the evaluation process. Another side effect observed in the findings was the increase of motivation to play games and team-work in students. Whereas some of them enjoyed being competitive, others enjoyed playing games as an alternative approach to vocabulary study in general.
Another aspect which draws attention is the fact that not all of the students were able to show a meaningful improvement as two students improved on a smaller scale. One explanation provided by Sokmen (1997) points to the notion that such a limited exposure to the target words could have been the cause of a small improvement. She states that “It is highly unlikely that an L2 student will be able to grasp even one meaning of a word in one encounter, let alone all of the degrees of knowledge inherent in learning a word (p.154).” An exposure to a word covering a range from 5 to 16 encounters is considered by Nation (1990, in Sokmen 1997) in order for a student to truly acquire a word. What these two statements suggest is that a constant review of vocabulary is needed so the vocabulary studied through the units of the text books can be better stored in the long term memory.

Playing in teams was enhanced during the implementation. This action allowed shy students to become more confident and develop a sense of group learning. Peer correction, despite not being directly addressed was developed as shown by students in the teacher’s observations to TWL simulation. By building up trust among students through games, it could be said that they became more and more motivated and confident to participate in speaking activities either by being competitive between themselves or by supporting each other with confusing tasks.

This study, despite the limitations it might have, could be a useful example for teachers whose main objective is to help their students to develop oral skills in L2. Teachers working in a similar context can benefit from this project by making the suggested amendments and adapting it to their current scenarios. Most private language institutions in my current context offer courses to students which are tailored to help them develop oral skills over writing skills for example. This phenomenon takes place because most of the people attend institutions offering those courses want to learn English for reasons of traveling and communication at work, but not for academic purposes, as a consequence, a relaxing approach to the development of oral skills could include games where students could develop confidence and be motivated to keep on learning more.
Other important contributions that this research has made include the development of team work in students, and peer correction, which, as stated above, were a side effect of the implementation impacting positively all of the participants. By reading this research, teachers could realize the importance of incorporating games in their lessons and presenting their students an alternative learning strategy which has proved to provide good results in several other research projects. The type of game selection would have to be considered by the teacher as here it was showed which of the games were better enjoyed by the participants and which others were not.

Finally, this project could establish the basis for a second action research cycle where the preferred vocabulary learning techniques of students are taken into consideration in the selection process of the games and assessment. It is important to remember that, when students’ interests are taken into account, they feel like their learning process is valuable and as a result, their effort could undergo improvement as well.

Limitations
One of the main factors that could have affected the results of this project is the time a game takes to produce results. When I think about the time students took to play the games, I consider that it was not enough for the amount of words they had to review. As it can be observed in the findings section, not all of the tokens were identified, which could imply that more revision was needed. It is a fact that, despite having a list of target words which had been taught previous to the implementation of this project, the amount required a longer time for reviewing. Only one student objected that the time to play was short, however, from a personal perspective, I agreed with this statement. As it was seen previously, longer encounters are suggested to achieve acquisition of words.

Another limitation to this implementation was the type of personalities that participants possessed. It was observed and then shown in the findings that shy students were affected by competitive ones, leading to an alteration of the results. It cannot be denied that peer correction is a good practice to promote in the classroom,
but it could also lead to a sense of anxiety in students. An example of this was reflected during the implementation of TWL and the interviews.

In the literature review and initial research it was established that when students are at the beginning stages of their learning process in L2, they rely on the creation of word families to understand vocabulary in English. By making relationships with words, students strengthen their lexicon. During the charades game, notes were taken, however, it would be interesting to also include recordings of students to analyze details from students’ participation and see whether or not they make use of synonyms of the target words. Nevertheless, in institutions were video recording is not allowed as it was this case, this type of information could not be taken into account.

**Changes next time around**

From a personal point of view, action research projects have given a space for the voices of those teachers who are constantly figuring out ways to improve their teaching practice. As for me, the present work has allowed me to discover decisions which I believe provided me with the opportunity to improve this project and tailor it to fit a broader audience.

There are a couple of points I would like to propose as changes next time around. First of all, at the beginning of this project, I defined the nature of the institution, which is one where students start courses, but few of them remain in their studies until concluding due to different personal reasons. Taking that into account, I would propose more strict measurements. As Burns (2002) states this type of research involves self-reflection, which at the same time demands time for observation and a thorough plan to address the issue and design a methodology that will better help to solve the problem.

Action research, and research in general can be conducted either individually or in groups. It would be recommended, in this particular context to conduct research in a group or pairs at least. The reason that justifies this idea comes from the way the courses are designed. Many students feel comfortable with a monthly course, some
others would prefer to learn from the same instructor for a longer period. Given the fact that changing a whole system requires more time and planning, for action research to be carried out, the only thing that is necessary is to have a group of teachers working towards a same goal. The observations and notes they can collect can enrich the initial research and the problem to address can be better identified.

In the case where, as in the present work, there is only one researcher. This teacher-researcher may make use of the monthly reports the teachers hand in during the evaluation period where they describe the behavior of the group and that of each student. These reports are not only handed in to describe students' behavior, but also to show which skills need to be reinforced in students. If a teacher conducts action research and makes use of these monthly reports, he or she can also interview each teacher who has taught the group before so a verification process can show if there is really a learning problem within the group to address or not.

Another change that could improve the results of the present research would be to form a new group of students that struggle with vocabulary only. In order to carry out the selection process, observations based on the previous suggestions would be needed and also, a formal invitation to the students to participate in that project. This idea comes from the notion that during the implementation many students quit school and others did not attend at times, resulting in a decrease of participants and an alteration of the final results.

During the initial research made for this project, observations and an examination of students' vocabulary was made based on images. The results as it could be observed at the beginning varied substantially, for that reason it would be recommended to use a set of flashcards or images in isolation in order to avoid students' confusion. Additionally, for purposes of verification, interviews would have to be carried out; both individual and a focus group interview.

Another adjustment that could be made would to change or modify the charades game. During this game, some students struggled to guess words and others to ask questions to guess the word, so this game could be improved by making a revision
in class of the target vocabulary in context so students can become familiar with the word families or other sets of words that can aid to describe the target ones. Additionally, some follow up activities could be implemented at the end of the session so students can make use of the words rehearsed with the games. Such activities could be as simple as a round of questions or defining the words used in the games in English using synonyms and antonyms or related words, as proposed previously.

In case the intervention is carried out during normal class time, more time would be needed to play. I noticed that one student openly declared that the time to play the games implemented was not enough, however, other students also agreed with this opinion. If the amount of playing time is increased and prolonged, better results might be obtained. At the end of the whole intervention, a focus group interview, additional to those individual interviews presented, could be carried out so even the smallest detail is taken into consideration.

Finally, a democratic selection of the games with the help of students would also be an interesting exercise. Students could be taken into account to select a group of games to rehearse their vocabulary which embed the characteristics of the learning activities they use the most, for example games as Scrabble, Bingo, Concentration, and Password which are similar to Jeopardy.

**Ways forward**

In her 1997 article “Current trends in teaching second language vocabulary,” Sokmen proposes that

> …if the encounters with a word are arranged in increasingly longer intervals, e.g. at the end of the class session, then 24 hours later, and then a week later, there is a greater likelihood of long-term storage than if the word had been presented at regular intervals (p. 154.)

Taking into account this suggestion, it would be interesting to observe the development of long-term memory in students through game-play arranged on a
similar way. The extent to which lexicon could develop would very likely allow students to become more fluent in English. Both results would benefit not only students, but also would match the interest of different institutions offering courses based on a communicative curriculum.

Another important consideration for a future action research project could inquire how institutions with a similar curriculum could benefit from this type of research taking into consideration the possible emergence of research groups within the institution to better tailor their curriculums to address students’ needs and interests. In the same manner, examining the alteration in students’ motivation and confidence development in depth through the use of game play would enhance the consideration for the careful implementation of this type of fun activities in the curriculum, not only as a means for having fun and relaxing, but for a long term learning.

Finally, I would like to propose the development of a project based solely on competitive games as was the case of Jeopardy and TWL. The justification for this, comes from the notion that I noticed a slight change in students’ motivation to strengthen their lexicon in order to win the games. Such a project could result in the development of vocabulary learning skills in students given proper instruction of them by teachers in the classroom.
References


Appendixes

Appendix 1. Picture sequence for storytelling

Appendix 2. Picture for vocabulary description
Appendix 3. Questions and clues for Snakes and Ladders Game

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>This person takes care of animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>This person looks after the security of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>This vegetable is white. Vampires hate this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>You put this clothing first, then your outfit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Make a sentence with the word credit card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You use this plastic money to pay at stores.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>This fruit is red and students give it to teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>This person looks after patients at a hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>This person CURES people when they are sick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>This vegetable is white and smells very bad, it looks like a circle with many layers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>This vegetable is orange and rabbits love to eat it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>This type of food is bland. It can be sweet or salty. You use it for sandwiches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>This food comes from cows, the color is yellow or white and you can find it in pizza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>This drink is sweet and it comes in different flavors, the most common brand is coke</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>This place looks like a mountain, but it has a hole on top and inside there is lava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Fish live in this place.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>When people are cold, they usually wear this, it comes in leather or wool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>This person designs houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>This person builds bridges and skyscrapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The brother of your father is your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>The sister of your mother is your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>The children of your aunt and uncle are your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>The baby boy of a couple is called: S _ _</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>When girls go to parties or important events, they usually wear this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Before putting on your shoes you put on your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>When temperatures fall and it is very very cold, people wear: C _ _ _ _</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>This vegetable is green and people use it for salads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>When the weather is hot, we eat this dessert. The most common flavors are Vanilla or Neapolitan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Give an example of a famous river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Give an example of a rainforest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4. Questions for The Weakest Link game

**WEAKEST LINK QUESTIONS**

NAME OF THE PERSON THAT TAKES CARE OF ANIMALS? - Vet

WHEN PEOPLE ARE COLD, THEY USUALLY WEAR THIS, IT COMES IN LEATHER AND WHOOL? – JACKET

THIS PERSON DESIGNS HOUSES? - ARCHITECT

THIS FOOD COMES FROM COWS, THE COLOR IS YELLOW OR WHITE AND YOU CAN FIND IT IN PIZZA. - CHEESE

THIS PERSON LOOKS AFTER PATIENTS AT A HOSPITAL. – NURSE

BEFORE PUTTING ON YOUR SHOES, YOU PUT ON YOUR. - SOCKS

GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A FAMOUS RIVER. – MISSISSIPPI

THE BABY BOY OF A COUPLE IS CALLED? – SON

THIS VEGETABLE IS WHITE AND SMELLS VERY BAD. IT LOOKS LIKE A CIRCLE WITH MANY LAYERS. – ONION

YOU USE THIS PLASTIC MONEY TO PAY AT STORES – CREDIT/ DEBIT CARD

WHEN THE WEATHER IS HOT WE EAT THIS DESSERT, THE MOST COMMON FLAVOUR IS NEapolitan – ICE CREAM

THE BROTHER OF YOUR FATHER IS YOUR? – UNCLE

WHEN GIRLS GO TO PARTIES OR IMPORTANT EVENTS THEY USUALLY WEAR THIS – DRESS

THIS VEGETABLE IS ORANGE AND RABBITS LOVE IT – CARROT

THE CHILDREN OF YOUR UNCLE AND YOUR AUNT ARE YOUR? – COUSINS

THIS VEGETABLE IS GREEN AND PEOPLE USE IT FOR SALADS – LETTUCE

NAME OF THE PERSON THAT LOOKS AFTER THE SECURITY OF PEOPLE – POLICE MAN/ OFFICER

NAME OF THE VEGETABLE THAT IS WHITE WHICH VAMPIRES HATE – GARLIC

YOU PUT THIS CLOTHING FIRST, THEN YOUR OUTFIT – UNDERWEAR

THIS FRUIT IS RED AND STUDENTS GIVE IT TO TEACHERS – APPLE

NAME OF THE PLACE WHERE FISH LIVE – SEA/ OCEAN

THIS PERSON CURES PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE SICK – DOCTOR

THIS TYPE OF FOOD IS BLAND, IT CAN BE SWEET OR SALTY, YOU USE IT FOR SANDWICHES – BREAD
THIS DRINK COMES IN DIFFERENT FLAVOURS, THE MOST COMMON IS COKE - SODA
THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE A MOUNTAIN BUT ON TOP IT HAS A HOLE AND INSIDE THE IS LAVA - VOLCANO
THIS PERSON BUILDS BRIDGES AND SKYSCRAPERS – ENGINEER
THE SISTER OF YOUR MOTHER IS YOUR – AUNT
WHEN TEMPERATURES ARE VERY VERY COLD, PEOPLE WEAR A: STARTS WITH “C” – COAT
GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A RAINFOREST – THE AMAZON
THE NIAGARA ARE AN EXAMPLE OF A – WATERFALL
THIS PERSON IS THE FATHER OF YOUR FATHER – GRANDFATHER
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PERSON WHO EXTINGUISHES FIRES? – FIREMAN
POPULAR DRINK THAT PEOPLE DRINK IN THE MORNING THAT IS BROWN - COFFEE
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE ANIMAL THAT LOOKS LIKE A BIRD BUT CANNOT FLY, IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE KENTUCKY BRAND – CHICKEN
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE THINGS YOU PUT ON YOUR FEET TO PROTECT THEM FROM THE GROUND? – SHOES
DESSERT THAT PEOPLE USUALLY EAT AT BIRTHDAYS TO CELEBRATE – CAKE
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PERSON THAT COLLECTS INFORMATION FOR THE NEWSPAPER, INTERVIEWS FAMOUS PEOPLE AND APPEARS ON TV – REPORTER
HOW DO PARENTS CALL TO THEIR BABY GIRL – DAUGHTER
NAME OF THE CLOTHES YOU PUT ON WHEN YOU GO TO THE BEACH – SWIMSUIT (DISTRACTOR)
NAME OF THE PERSON THAT TAKES YOUR ORDER IN A RESTAURANT – WAITER
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE ANIMAL THAT IS THE BEST FRIEND OF HUMANS - DOG
WHAT IS THE NAME OF A SMALL PIECE OF LAND IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WATER, IT STARTS WITH “I” – ISLAND
NAME OF THE FAVORITE FRUIT OF MONKEYS – BANANA
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PLACE THAT LOOKS LIKE A MOUNTAIN BUT HAS LAVA INSIDE? – VOLCANO
NAME OF THE PERSON THAT HELPS STUDENTS TO LEARN AT SCHOOL – TEACHER
NAME OF THE LITTLE FRUIT THAT YOU CAN FIND IN ALMOST ANY CANDY IT STARTS WITH “ST” – STRAWBERRY
WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE SHOES THAT WE USE TO DO EXERCISE – TRAINERS/ TENNIS/ SNEAKERS
NAME OF THE CLOTHES MEN WEAR WHEN THEY WANT TO LOOK FORMAL AT WORK OR ON A SPECIAL OCCASION. – SUIT

WHAT IS THE NAME FOR THE HIGH ELEVATION OF LAND THAT SOMETIMES IS COVERED BY SNOW, ONE EXAMPLE OF THIS IS MOUNT EVEREST. – MOUNTAIN

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE VEGETABLE WITH WHICH PEOPLE MAKE KETCHUP - TOMATO

IN GEOGRAPHY, WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE DEPRESSION OF LAND THAT HAS MOUNTAINS AROUND AND A RIVER IN THE MIDDLE, IT STARTS WITH “VA” – VALLEY

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PERSON SELLING CLOTHES AT A STORE – SALES ASSISTANT

WHEN A COUPLE GETS MARRIED THE MAN USUALLY WEARS A BLACK? – SUIT

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE PLACE WHERE PEOPLE GO IN THE SUMMER THAT HAS HOT WEATHER AND SAND. – BEACH

HOW DO YOU CALL THE MEAT OF THE COW – BEEF

WHAT IS THE NAME OF THE FOOD THAT LOOKS LIKE A SANDWICH, BUT IS BIGGER AND HAS CHEESE, BEEF AND VEGETABLES INSIDE, YOU CAN FIND IT AT Mc DONALDS. – HAMBURGER

MENTION A POPULAR T-SHIRT BRAND – POLO

DURING SUMMER, AT THE BEACH GIRLS USUALLY WEAR SWIMSUITS AND MEN WEAR – SHORTS

AFTER TAKING A SHOWER, WHAT DO YOU PUT ON FIRST? IT STARTS WITH THE LETTER “U” – UNDERWEAR

WHAT DOES MARIO BROSS EAT TO GROW BIG IN THE GAME? – MUSHROOMS

WHEN CHICKENS ARE BORN, THEY COME FROM A ROUND THING CALLED – EGG

WHAT CAN YOU USE TO COVER FROM THE RAIN? – UMBRELLA

AT NIGHT, WHAT ARE THOSE SMALL LIGHTS IN THE SKY NEXT TO THE MOON? CONSTELLATIONS ARE MADE OF THEM – STARS

YOUR PARENTS ARE YOU? – MOTHER AND FATHER
Appendix 5. Final Interview

¿Cómo sientes que has mejorado respecto a tu nivel de inglés desde el nivel básico al actual?

¿Cuál es la habilidad que consideras más difícil en inglés y que representa un reto para ti?

¿Qué crees que sea lo que origina que tengas dificultad en esa área?

Enfocándonos únicamente al área del vocabulario, ¿cómo consideras tu desempeño y por qué?

¿Cómo aprendes vocabulario? ¿Utilizas alguna técnica para aprenderlo?

¿Y cómo lo repasas? ¿Posees de igual forma una técnica?

Para ti, ¿cuál es una buena estrategia para repasar vocabulario? ¿Por qué?

Cuando realizamos los juegos de vocabulario en el salón de clase, ¿cómo te sentiste? ¿Consideras que te ayudó a recordar y mejorar tu vocabulario o no? ¿Por qué?

¿Qué fue lo que te gustó, no te gustó, o no entendiste de los juegos implementados en clase?

¿Qué modificaciones le harías a esos juegos a modo de que favorecieran tu aprendizaje? ¿Por qué?
Appendix 6. Memory Game

Appendix 7. Field Notes

Field notes

The students who didn’t return to this unit (month) after the initial research are Samantha (she lives in a very far place) and Yarelli (She’s expecting a baby). However we have a new student, Armando.

Implementation 1
Jeopardy game

For this first implementation of the Project I divided the group into pairs since they were eight and there were only 4 characters available to be chosen in the jeopardy: Team Celery, Team Tomato, Team Potato and Team Onion.

We started playing in the last hour of the class so I could notice that even though students were excited about the game, they were also tired of working.
I explained the instructions to the students and they understood them quickly since they said, they had played the game before or had watched it on tv.

**Implementation 2**

Charades

In the second half of the class I gave students the instruction of the game. They felt interested and excited since they were very bored in class. Some of them said they were tired.

I gave each one a piece of paper with the name of a profession written. We went outside the room, to the lobby of the building to play. The first student to participate in the game was Armando who struggled a little to guess his word.

Marlene: firefighter

Fedra: sales assistant/ seller

Armando: engineer

Sheyla: nurse

Sarahi: police officer

Yoza: vet

Judith: reporter

I noticed that students as Fedra, Yoza and Judith had great difficulty with grammar and most of them forgot vocabulary.

I didn’t allow them to speak in Spanish, which caused anxiety in them.

**Implementation 3**

Snakes and ladders

In this implementation the students felt really relaxed. They all played in pairs and were having lots of fun. Due to the noise in the school I didn’t hear them speaking Spanish, which was really good.
For this game I didn’t need any explanation

The winners were

Yarelli - Judith - Yoza - Sarahi

Implementation 4
Memory game

This day not all students arrived early, some of them incorporated periodically. Judith arrived late, Yozabet too. I think that affected to whole atmosphere because while the others were playing, the ones who arrived interrupted and incorporated themselves to the game.

I noticed that the word coat is quite difficult for them to learn as well as garlic and onion. Students confuse both words, garlic and onion.

Yoza won the game, she seems to have very good visual skills

I constantly repeated the pronunciation of some words so students could repeat them.

Students like Fedra, Yoza, Judith and Marlene struggle with the pronunciation of certain words, but Marlene is still good at vocabulary

Implementation 5.

Jeopardy

During this final implementation before the evaluation with TWL. Students were really relaxed. I could notice that they were very familiar with the design of the game and some of them mentioned that the images in the jeopardy used were “nice and cute.” I could observe the group performing much better in comparison to the first time they played jeopardy. Most of the target words were guessed.
Implementation 6
The weakest link

In this game everything was arranged so no misunderstandings could appear though, Marlene didn’t understand the instruction in English so I had to explain everything in Spanish.

I think that the order in which students were eliminated, except for Armando, reflects actually the knowledge they had of the vocabulary. Sarahi was the winner and she actually is the student who performed better in all of the games.

Probably the competence was not good for all of the students since some of them felt very frustrated at parts when they were asked a question timed.

Sarahi was the most excited in the game. She showed her competitiveness as well as Marlene who actually tried to win the game by playing a strategy but the others didn’t allow her.

Armando was eliminated first, but I remember how he was whispering words (answers) to questions he knew.

Students had a lot of fun. The time and the stress with which the game was played made them enjoy the pressure.

I could notice in the game that at parts students didn’t know the answer to the questions in the moment but they remembered from the implementation that they had seen the word previously

Here sarahi interrupted a lot other participants and made them feel anxious and I think, she also made them feel insecure

Implementation 6 (extra note)
The weakest link

I am taking this note after the game since I could not do it while the game was played because I was reading clues, controlling the timer and the game in general. I noticed
that sarahi and other participants interrupted a lot, this was maybe because they felt frustrated by the performance of others when they gave wrong answers which they knew.

Armando was first voted off probably because all of the other players were females.

Judith mentioned “seeing” words during the implementations, but at the time she was asked she forgot them.

**Extra notes**

There were implementations in which it was difficult for me to take field notes since I was conducting the games as it was the case of the last jeopardy and the simulation of TWL.

As we can observe, during the initial research, there were 8 participants, however, as described during the first chapter, dropouts were likely to take place in that institution so, three students quit lessons for reasons of work and place of living. One student was incorporated to the group during the first week of implementation, nevertheless his data was not taken into account in the present work due to the fact that he was not present during the initial research and there was a lack of information of his vocabulary weaknesses.