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Improving students' vocabulary and comprehension using playful activities with tenth grade students at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

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iv. Abstract

Vocabulary is critical in the acquisition of a foreign language. Thus, the students' improvement of vocabulary infer in their ability to be successful in other skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Getting into the problem in study, helping students to learn new vocabulary is fundamental in the process of understanding reading comprehension. That is why, teachers must be worried about looking for rightly strategies to teach students' vocabulary and help them to acquire language.

In this sense, the current research intends to provide readers with valuable strategies to reflect on how they can encourage the acquisition of vocabulary in English classes, making learners proficient to use vocabulary accurately and communicate effectively.

This project is aimed to tenth grade students between 15 to 35 years old at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente from San Ramon downtown and nearby.

Major findings regards on students' lack of vocabulary, reading comprehension and speaking.

Conclusions and implications focuses on the importance of using appropriate strategies to improve students' vocabulary and make them conscious about the importance of learning English. Knowing students' interests, learning styles, abilities and prior level of vocabulary before applying any strategy is meaningful. Finally, Teachers are called to reflect how games would improve learners' vocabulary.

v. Acknowledgment

I am thankful to God that I got the opportunity to develop a new project in my life, thereby giving me health to get my goals.

A am really grateful with my parents that encourage me to going ahead, fighting and working hard and having faith to believe in my dreams. Mainly, I thank to them for loving me.

I feel proud of my husband for supporting me to take risks and challenges, and helping me to growth in my professional life.

vi. Dedicatory

I am pleased to dedicate the present work to my daughter and son, which are the main reason to work every day in the achievement of my goals.

To my parents, they trusted and supported me to be a good person and grow in the professional field.

To end, to the tutor and readers involved in this work that contribute to succeed in the projects' development, supporting me with their knowledge and advices to get the purpose of this paper.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The current study is focused on the significance of learning vocabulary, and the need to improve it in EFL classes for its application in a given context.

Vocabulary is the most critical part of the teaching- learning process of a second language being that it relates to the four skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Wilkins (1972) states that: ''There is not much value in being able to produce grammatical sentences if one has not got the vocabulary that is needed to convey what one wishes to say; While without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed'' (p. 111). This means learning a foreign language not only implies to know grammatical structures and being able to use them correctly when writing, but also to recognize the vocabulary itself to be clearer when trying to transmit to others the idea we want to communicate. As vocabulary and grammatical structures are needed to write or speak, they also are necessary when reading and listening in order to show understanding of the language. Thus, there is no acquisition of language if there is no vocabulary to make students communicate their thoughts assertively.

As Stahl (2005) argues, Vocabulary knowledge is knowledge; the knowledge of a word not only implies a definition, but also implies how that word fits into the world." (P.506) According to the author's point of view, he wants to show there are a lot of situations students are exposed every day. So, learners must be able to apply the words correctly according to different situations and also

to know when they must be used considering the situation they are facing. Actually, this is one of the main difficulties learners face when learning a foreign language if they do not show understanding and they do not have enough vocabulary. As they are unable to find the correct word and use it properly, they are not going to succeed when communicating in English. Sometimes, they acquire vocabulary after many times of being exposed to the words, but they do not really know how to use them according to a given specific situation. As a result, it is difficult for students to communicate with others effectively when they lack vocabulary.

In order to improve students' abilities, learners must know or master certain amount of words. However, there are some difficulties not only for students when learning vocabulary, but also for teachers when they lack suitable strategies to teach it. For example, teachers face a huge challenge in their classrooms since they find very diverse groups of students with varied learning styles and abilities to acquire a foreign language. Thus, determining the right strategies would require a great effort when adopting them to satisfy students' needs. Regarding learners, they have to distinguish not only the words, but also how to use them correctly according to the context. Sometimes students face difficulties regarding listening, reading, speaking and writing because of the lack of vocabulary. As learning vocabulary is really important, it is necessary to find effective ways to help students master it, and improve the linguistic comprehension of English as a foreign language.

There are vast strategies in which vocabulary improvement can be encouraged by teachers and learned by learners. For example, matching images

with words would be a good strategy to help students to get a clearer understanding of the language and its meaning.

This study examined the importance of vocabulary regarding the following questions: How can students most efficiently improve their vocabulary in English? What are the best techniques to teach vocabulary to tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente? How can students improve their linguistic comprehension of English as a foreign language?, The main purpose is to directly benefit tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente in order to accrue their linguistic levels and increase their competences.

1.2 Rationale

Learning English as a foreign language in Costa Rica has become a great need in the last years not only because this country is a place of big tourist attraction, but also because as society evolves, learning a foreign language becomes a priority for people to communicate with English speakers who visit the country and also to acquire a well-paid job because as it is known, most of the jobs applications forms requires English spoken or written.

> "Nowadays English language is considered the main communication element among varied cultures. On the other hand, it has grown into the most imperative because it is present around the world. Likewise, it is the official language of dominant countries worldwide; mainly of the United States and England". (Benbibre, n.d)

Based on this, it would be accurate to say that every one of the job opportunities people face every day requires the use of the English language. As it

has been noticed, in the majority of the employments at least a basic level of the English language is needed since a high proportion of foreign people are getting into the commercial businesses. So, it is also a need they have to know their clients' needs and communicate successfully with them.

> "Globalization has played an essential role when spreading the English language through the use of series, movies and music which makes English growth everywhere. Also, it has advanced in the economic and political fields where English is becoming the main language" (Benbibre, n.d).

Taking this situation into account, it arises the need of encouraging students' population to learn English as a foreign language looking for strategies that allow teachers to increase the students' English level of vocabulary, and make them able to communicate with others, acquiring knowledge and being prepared to work. According to Marzano (2004), background knowledge is learned through the aptitude of the learner to process and store knowledge and the consistency of pupils to take educational involvement (p.73). As the author mentioned before, the students' capacities and their experiences influence the acquisition of information since they are intertwined and allow learners to gain vocabulary, make them to be successful or not in the learning process, and also allow them to have a good achievement of language.

High school students are immersed in a MEP program where they receive about three to five lessons per week approximately, and the effective time is not

enough to acquire the language properly. Due to learners' lack of proficiency in English, they are unable to communicate in the foreign language.

This project would be a good impact as it pretends to get the students interested in learning English; also, it promotes the students' good academic performance and a good use of time in the classroom.

1.3 Purpose
The aim of this research is to test how the use of playful reading strategies helps students to improve their vocabulary and comprehension of English as a foreign language; the following goals will guide this research.

1.3.1 General Objective
To improve students' comprehension and vocabulary through the application of playful reading strategies when teaching English as a foreign language.

1.3.2 Specific objectives
1. To diagnose students' comprehension level and vocabulary knowledge.

2. To apply vocabulary wheel, card games, flashcards, magazines, books and newspapers when teaching vocabulary to students at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente in San Ramón.

3. To assess students' improvement in vocabulary application and comprehension.

1.3.3 Research Questions

In order to analyze the importance of vocabulary in learning a foreign language the following questions will address this research.

1. How can students most efficiently improve their vocabulary in English?

2. What are the best techniques to teach vocabulary to tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente?

3. How can students improve their linguistic comprehension of English as a foreign language?

4. How much students can improve in their proficiency of vocabulary and comprehension, after being taught with playful reading strategies?

1.3.4 Hypothesis
The use of playful reading strategies when teaching, improve students' comprehension and vocabulary of English as a foreign language.

Chapter II

Literature review

2.1 Literature review

Nowadays, communication is increasing among people from different countries and learning a foreign language has been a necessity. It becomes such a significant language that countless people are interested in learning English. The use of language has been essential because as society evolves, new educational ideas, business strategies, tourists and immigrants are coming into our country and the need to communicate with them is getting significant.

Taking into account the need of teaching English, the Costa Rican educational authorities have decided to make improvements in the English programs with the purpose of improving the students' competences and make them very well trained to work in any other field where spoken or written English is required. This worried took place since they realized there were some deficiencies in the programs which impeded students to develop their communicative competences.

In order to orient the reader, the focus of this research was to test how the use of playful reading strategies improves students' comprehension and vocabulary of English as a foreign language. Thus, the literature review was organized into concepts, theories, issues, and strategies to support this research.

Regarding the importance of vocabulary and comprehension in the acquisition of language, the following key terms are going to be included to provide the reader a little understanding of the information that is going to be covered along this study.

2.2 Key terms

Academic performance: it is everything related to the students' acquisition of goals, procedures and abilities during the learning-teaching process. It involves results (King, P (1967).

Classroom: there is a room in a high school, school, college or any other institution where a group of students is being instructed. (Oxford dictionaries).

Classroom environment: it is the whole climate of a classroom where the teacher is in charge of developing a good environment to facilitate learning. (The free dictionary)

Communication: It is a process where people express ideas, feelings and share information by using gestures, postures, signs, and words while they exchange thoughts, messages or information (Crystal, 1985).

Comprehension: The definition of comprehension refers to the students' capacity to understand or construct the meaning of something that you read or listen. (Oxford dictionaries).

Improvement: it refers to the fact of improving something that is wrong or improving in any other field where we have deficiencies. (Merriam Webster's dictionary).

Learners: people who are involved in learning and teaching process. (Merriam Webster's dictionary).

Learning process: it is a process in which students acquire knowledge and improve their skills (Thomas & Muga (2014).

Knowledge: it is understood as what learners get familiar with, gain or know through their proficiencies. (Merriam Webster's dictionary).

Strategies: It refers to methods or techniques teachers use to teach the students what they need to learn (Merriam Webster's dictionary).

Meaning: Referring to what is intended to be communicated or expressed (Wood, 1995).

Teaching process: it is a process of instruction where teachers guide and help students to acquire knowledge; also they help them to put into practice their abilities in order to achieve academic goals. (Kpolovie, & Makeva (2015).

Teachers: Teachers are professionals who have the ability to teach, and train students what they need to learn (Merriam Webster's dictionary).

Vocabulary: refers to the words learners need to know in any language (Merriam Webster's dictionary).

Word: include letters which its meaning can be represented when spoken or written (Oxford Dictionaries).

Translation: The process of translating words or text from one language into another (Oxford dictionaries).

2.3 Definition of vocabulary

Vocabulary is defined as the words students need to know to communicate assertively and without them students do not succeed in the acquisition of a foreign language. Ur (1998) states: "Vocabulary can be defined, roughly, as the words we teach in the foreign language (p.60). In addition, Nunan (1991), states that "the acquisition of an adequate vocabulary is essential for successful second language

use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structures and functions we may have learned for comprehensible communication" (p.117).   Indeed, learners face difficulties when trying to express their ideas because the limited vocabulary they have difficult communicating in English, make them to be misunderstood when they have a conversation or they do not understand others. As seen, the achievement and comprehension of vocabulary is a hard task. The acquisition of vocabulary not only includes the word itself, but also it is based on meaning, form and use. According to Nation (2001), the usage of a word includes its articulation, written form and any prefix, root, or suffix which creates this term. Based on this theory, it is clear that knowing vocabulary is more than to know the word and its definition. To end up, the fact of acquiring vocabulary is to know the way it must be applied in different circumstances.

2.4 Vocabulary knowledge in language communication

Vocabulary is the base for communication. An affluent vocabulary makes learners have a good academic performance in listening, speaking, reading and writing; and also to have a better understanding of language. Thus, vocabulary knowledge is substantial for students to understand what they read or listen. In addition, the correct use and understanding of sufficient vocabulary allow them to acquire language easily and succeed in oral and reading comprehension tasks. For instance, Cardenas (2001) states that vocabulary is used to determine the proficiency a student has in oral context. In this way, there is no doubt that the ability and success of communicating in any language depends on the vocabulary the students are able to learn. To sum, it can be said that learners do not acquire

language if they are unable to master vocabulary. To reinforce this matter, Lewis (1993) argue, "lexis is the core or heart of language" (p. 89). So, it is significant for students to get involved in a social environment where they exploit their speaking skill and improve their vocabulary while they are exposed to new words. Once they have been already exposed many times to them, they are capable of applying it suitably. This fact is augmented by Nation (2001) who "describes the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: knowledge of vocabulary enables language use and, conversely, language use leads to an increase in vocabulary knowledge". (p.22)

2.5 Teaching grammar and its importance in context

According to Thornbury (1999) grammar is a description of the rules for forming sentences, including an account of the meanings that these forms convey (p.13). Analyzing the words mentioned before, it is clear that grammar knowledge is central to create meaningful statements and use the language appropriately.

The process of teaching grammar in context is a hard matter. Its understanding and correct use requires a lot of effort for learners to master them, a well-trained teacher and strategies to instruct them about how the language works; and the aspects that make up grammar. To reinforce this idea, Ellis (2006) claims "Grammar teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to metalinguistically understand it; process it in comprehension and production so that they can internalize it (p.84). Based on this theory, it is precise

to say that learners acquire grammatical structures and apply them better when they are instructed in context since it allows them to recognize the way they must be used assertively; meantime they gain new language rules and master its use.

2.6 Definition of reading

The act of reading is crucial for students to develop their thoughts, analytical capacity and improve their vocabulary. The ability of reading is stated as a difficult process as diverse factors such as comprehension, thoughts, recognition, syntax, background knowledge and perception influence its acquisition. In addition, the act of reading depends on the students' capacity to use their understanding to create meaning, understand what they have read and show restored literacy advancement. In order to reinforce this conception, attempted definitions by some researchers have been taken into account with the purpose of having a better understanding of this process. To exemplify, Stallfter (1969), states teachers define reading as "a difficult practice. Learners read to acquire data from the written material. They must be competent to utter and understand the impressed words, symbols, signs, and marks by conveying connotation to them." On the other hand, Smith (1973) defines reading as "an act of communication in which information is transferred from a transmitter to a receiver" (p.2). Furthermore, William (1984) contends" reading is a procedure through which readers glance and comprehends what has been printed".

2.7 Reading comprehension in language communication

Comprehension is the aim of reading and the process of building meaning through the learner's prior knowledge and background. To support this view, Harris & Hodges (1995) describes reading comprehension as follows

> Reading comprehension is the construction of the meaning of a written or spoken communication through a reciprocal, holistic interchange of ideas between the interpreter and the message. . . The presumption here is that meaning resides in the intentional problem-solving, thinking processes of the interpreter, . . . that the content of the meaning is influenced by that person's prior knowledge and experience.(p. 39)

This idea refers to the connections learners are able to make among the information he has read and the information he has previously acquired. Kruidenier (2002) also declares that comprehension is an active process and the reader must interact and be engaged with the text for it to work well (p.77). In this sense, the interaction with the written material is vital to understand what he just read. The significance of reading comprehension relies on its contribution to make learners develop their comprehension abilities, critical thinking and analytical aptitude while they build meaning.

2.8 Playful strategies for teaching vocabulary

Many factors must be considered when deciding how to teach vocabulary. The following strategies will guide this study in order to make students improve their vocabulary.

2.8.1 Using objects

The use of this technique helps learners to memorize vocabulary or phrases since their memory works better when they are engaged in activities that include the use of realia or visual material such as pictures that help them to make connections between the object they have observed and its meaning.

2.8.2 Drawing

This method is useful for students because it is easier for them to learn when they do it by themselves, so the use of this technique helps teachers to instruct vocabulary. For instance, educators can use descriptions of places, people or any other topic to make students draw what they listen or they imagine. So, learners associate and construct meaning by themselves.

2.8.3 Illustrations and pictures

The use of this strategy involves sources such as flashcards, drawings, photographs, posters, pictures or newspaper pictures among others. Its application helps students to improve mainly their communicative skill. As learners acquire new vocabulary and they use their prior knowledge to describe what they have

seen they get fluency meanwhile they learn how vocabulary must be used according to the given situation.

2.8.4 Mime, Charades and Gestures

Practicing this activity engages students in the classroom environment and makes them participate in interactive activities. So, they comprehend better the use of language when they have an active participation in class.

2.8.5 Memory games

Using memory games provide learners a comfortable and motivating classroom environment. So, the teaching- learning process improves the acquisition of language while they learn subconsciously. Using this technique drags learner's concentration and encourages them to get involved in the activities.

2.8.6 Spelling of words

Bearing the importance of speaking and writing this is an excellent strategy to teach students the way letters must be pronounced and a word must be written. Applying spelling as a competition in the classroom, teachers recognize their student's deficiencies regarding   pronunciation and writing.

2.9 Reading strategies for improving comprehension

Regarding reading comprehension and its importance in the acquisition of language, the following strategies are going to be included as a contribution to get the objectives of this research.

2.9.1 Guessing meaning from Context

This strategy has been recognized as a suitable technique to improve the student's reading skill and understand reading passages. Thus, its practice gets students familiar with unknown vocabulary and allows them to learn how a word functions in a statement or paragraph.

2.9.2 Asking questions

This technique encourages learners by asking themselves questions and emphasizes their objective of reading on getting the most important ideas in a text. This idea also helps teachers to monitor if pupils have understood the written information.

Concluding, the use of vocabulary and comprehension of English a Foreign language not only is significant for learners, but also a complicated process. So, the purpose of improving tenth grade students at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente will be addressed through the application of the teaching vocabulary and comprehension strategies before stated.

CHAPTER III

Design and Method

3.1 Research Method

As it has been cleared throughout this study, there are a lot of concerns or factors to improve in the learning-teaching process. This work especifically focuses on difficulties learners and teachers face regarding vocabulary. With the purpose of conducting this study effectively, the action research method was conducted, and its main aspects are going to be mentioned hereafter. By describing this research method, it is important to clarify this is an excellent tool to help teachers identify and solve current troubles in educational institutions because it allows teachers to focus on weaknesses they would like to improve in their learning-teaching process. Likewise, this method provides researchers important aspects to be taken into account when attending a research, besides; it provides mechanisms to succeed in our task. Among the aspects to be considered, there are identification of a problem, creation of an action plan, collection and analysis of information, conclusions, recommendations and results once the investigation has finished. As the action research has been described, it is clear to define it as a process that allows teachers to analyze what changes and strategies can be applied in their classrooms to overcome the existing problems, improve students' knowledge and assess their usefulness as teachers. For instance, Johnson (2005) points out "action research is a powerful tool for helping you work on the many challenges you confront in the teaching-learning process". At the same time, Watts (1985) contends "action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research (p. 118).

3.2 Type of approach

In order to get the purpose of this study, a mixed approach was used since the use of quantitative and qualitative instruments such as questionnaires, surveys or observations among others will conduct the collection and analysis of data. Quantitative research consists of those studies in which the data concerned can be analyzed in terms of numbers. (Best and Khan, 1989: 89-90). The aim of this method is to obtain and interpret numerical data to support the hypothesis suggested.

On the other hand, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) claim that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach: "This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). It means this approach is based on the researchers' interpretation, the way the observed situations are perceived and how the information is gathered. So, analyzing the hypothesis proposed in this research the mixed approach provides a great contribution to get the objectives of this investigation since it integrates both methods.

3.3 The context

With the aim of getting the objectives of this research, tenth grade learners at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente in San Ramon were taken into account as the primary source to carry out this study. An observation and a diagnostic test were applied to the students in order to determine their level of vocabulary and comprehension in English. Secondary sources such as online books, dictionaries, and websites were used to guide the development of this project

3.3.1 Chosen setting

This study was conducted at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente which is located in San Ramon, in the circuit 01 of west regional office of education. The institution was founded in 1967, and it was created because of the need of getting adults instructed since they did not have the opportunity of being prepared for the lack of evening classes. Thus, being deputy the professor Trino Zamora Jiménez its creation was given on December 21, 1966. Currently the institution has 44 qualified teachers, and a population of 880 students who come from San Ramon downtown and its surroundings. The institution has seven tenth grade groups of 22 students each one. The total population of students in this public high school has a low level of proficiency in English. They are between the ages of 15 to 35 years old; there are some exceptions because a few students are more than 35 years old.

3.3.2 Population

Participants of this study involved a fraction of tenth grade students at Liceo Julián Volio Llorente in the school year 2019.

3.3.3 Sample of the Study

A sample of 22 tenth grade students was selected to carry out the study. The project was guided with one tenth grade group which is the main source to collect the data.

3.4 Data collection procedures and tools of initial research

With the purpose of collecting data, a set of instruments conducted this study. The process has a guideline to follow; it requires the application of some data collection tools like an observation and a diagnostic test. Those instruments were applied with the aim of getting relevant information about the problem under analysis.

3.4. 1 Procedures of initial research

The initial step consisted on applying a students' pre- test. Once all the procedures were followed, a post-test was applied to test the suggested hypothesis. The problem to address is the students' lack of vocabulary and comprehension of English as a foreign language, and it was known after observing the students' performance in English classes. According to the observation process, the students are able to understand units of words when the teacher uses gestures or mimics to make them understand what she is explaining or reading.

Otherwise, they do not understand the meaning of a whole sentence or paragraph. Since this project is expected to improve the students' level of vocabulary and comprehension a set of playful strategies will be applied.

3.4.2 Instruments

3.4.2.1 Pre- test

After analyzing the problem addressed in this paper, an observation and a student's test were carried out in order to determine the students' level of vocabulary and comprehension in English. A pre- test is defined as "a primary test directed to define a student's prior knowledge or willingness for an academic practice or program of study" (The American heritage dictionary, 2016).

3.4.2.2 Observation

A classroom observation is defined as "the strong-willed inspection of teaching and learning actions through the organized procedures of data compilation and examination (Bailey, 2001). Its use is really significant to determine the students' weaknesses and strengths and also to identify the strategies to improve them. In order to carry out this stage, students are asked to solve a short diagnostic to test their level of vocabulary and comprehension.

3.4.3 Diagnostic Data Analysis

The following graphs show the results found in the initial diagnostic test, each one of the evaluated items will be represented as follow. (See Annex 1)

Graph 1: Reading Comprehension Item
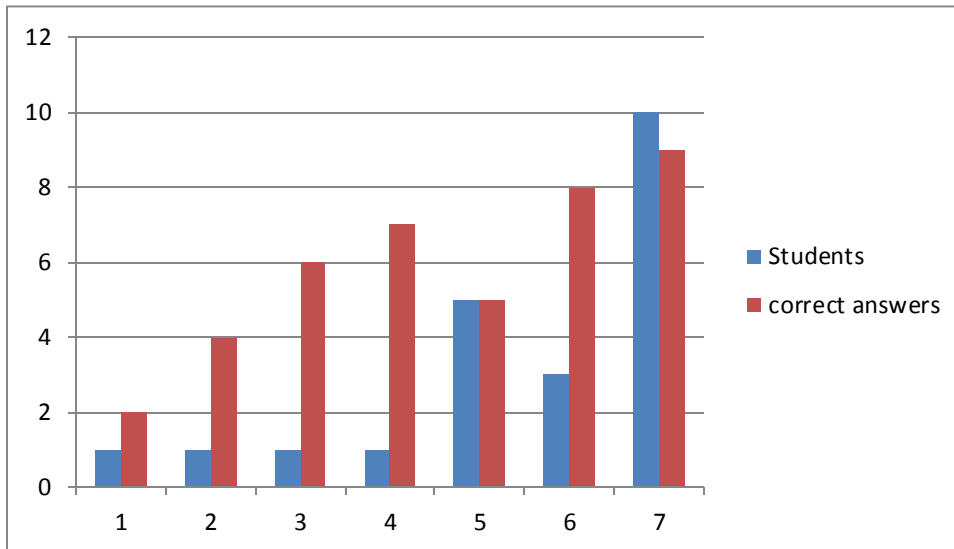
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

The graph shows a reading comprehension exercise of ten questions regarding multiple choice, it demonstrates that two learners have a very low level of proficiency regarding reading comprehension, since they had two and four correct answers. Five learners have got half of the points, and fifteen of the pupils have got the majority of the answers correctly. (See Annex 1)

Graph 2: Greetings, Introductions and leave Takings Item
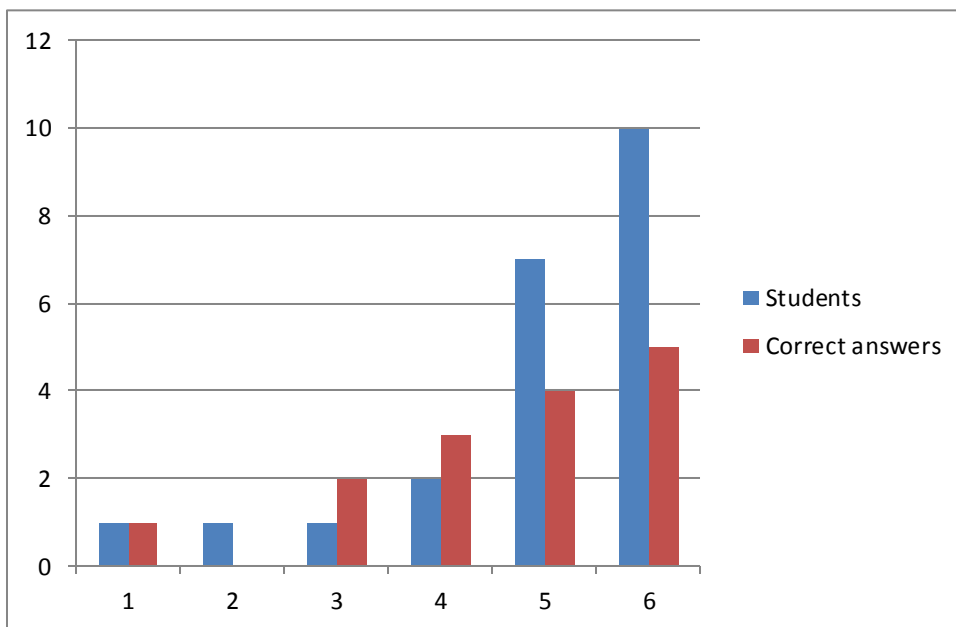
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

Regarding the item about greetings, leave takings and introductions, almost all of the students did not have any problems because they recognized which of them are formal or informal. A minority of the students had troubles regarding the way they must be used. (See Annex 1)

Graph 3: Personal Information Questions Item
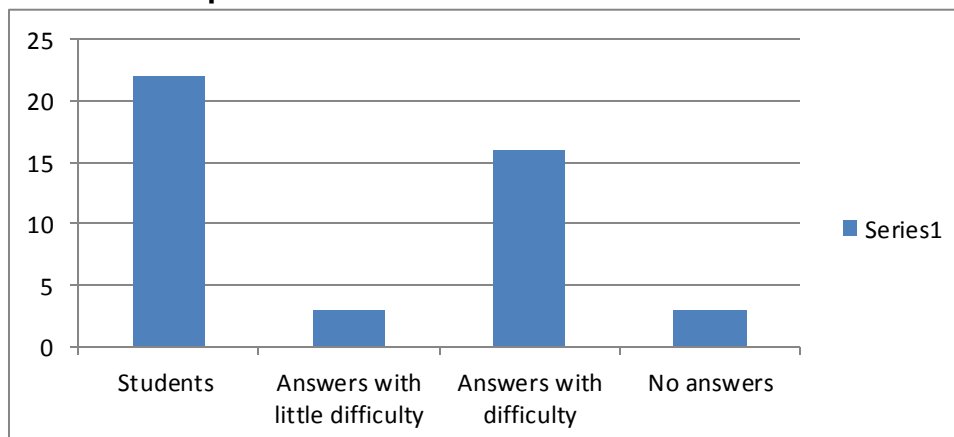
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

Bearing the use of personal information questions and the way they must be answered, almost all the students had difficulties because they do not know how to use the verb to be correctly. Almost all of them omit the verb to be, or other verbs they need to make the reader understand what they want to express (See Annex 1).

Graph 4. Verb To Be Item
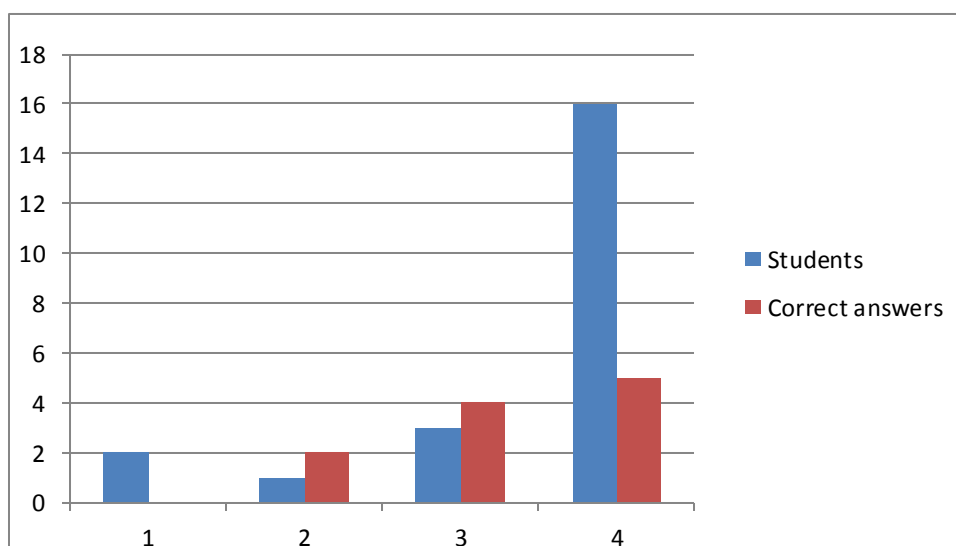
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

Taking into account the situation described in the previous graph, it is important to clarify that students have problems when they must apply the verb to be to provide written information. As the graphic shows, the majority of them are able to conjugate the verb properly when they are exposed to complete statements where the appropriate form of the verb to be is requested (See Annex 1)

Graph 5. Written Production Item
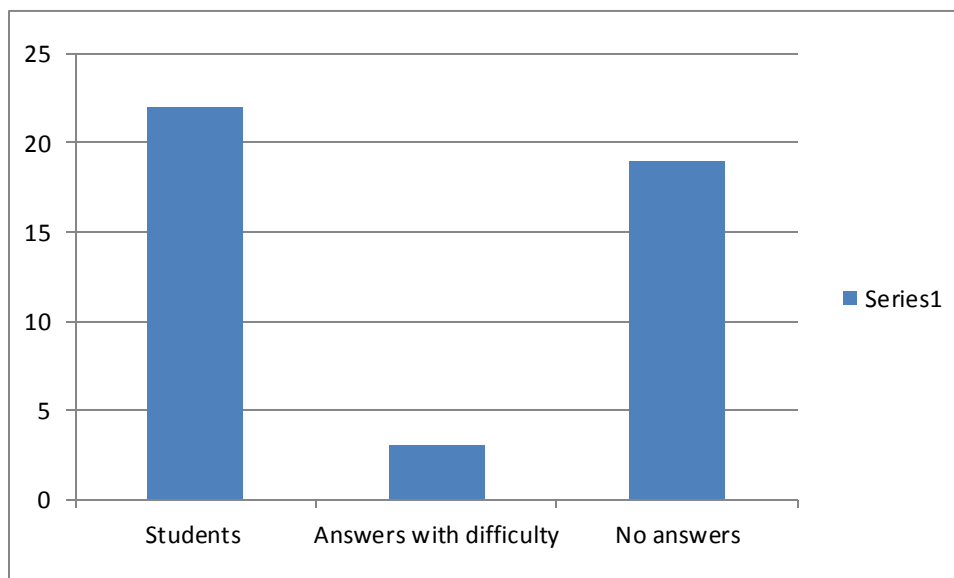
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

As the graph represents, the majority of the students are unable to provide written data, almost all of them did not provide answers, while three of them do it with difficulty. They face problems in sentence structure, spelling of words, word order, infinitives and verbs (See Annex 1).

3.5 Action Plan

3.5.1 Strategies to address the problem

Regarding the problem forward in this study, the use of several activities would be encouraged in the classroom along three weeks with diverse techniques such as vocabulary wheel, card games, flash cards, magazines, newspapers among others to make students improve their vocabulary and comprehension of English. The resources previously mentioned were included when performing

activities like work in groups or pairs, competitions, debates and others that are going to be described as follow:

3.5.1.2 Contests: The teacher promotes a competition among students and asks them to get into two groups to dramatize, mime or charade specific vocabulary or phrases such as verbs or actions (sports), to guess them while they earn points.

3.5.1.3 Drawing: this technique encourages students to interact with their classmates while they acquire new vocabulary. Thus, the teacher gives them a paragraph to be read and asks them to get the main ideas, draw a picture of them and describe them to their classmates.

3.5.1.4 True or false: the teacher brings a passage about Costa Rican art for example, organizes the students in pairs, and asks them to solve a true or false exercise, once they have finished, learners are randomly selected to show the answers orally to the rest of the class.

3.5.1.5 Debates: the teacher points students in a circle, gives them a topic "Costa Rican typical food", once they have read the information, the teacher asks them to have a discussion asking for information or opinions.

3.5.1.6 Storytelling: the teacher can use this technique to inspire students' creativity and ease learning. This is an attractive strategy to make students acquire vocabulary. For example, the teacher gives students some pictures and asks them to create a story about what they have seen in the picture.

3.5.1.7 Asking questions: the teacher gives students a reading, and then the class is organized in pairs to create and answer questions in simple present tense

regarding the information from the reading. Then, learners show their questions to the rest of the class.

3.5.1.8 Memory games: the teacher asks students to close their eyes while she reads loud out a story or paragraph, when she finish, the students are asked to show what they remember.

3.5.1.9 Role play: the teacher divides the class into two groups and provides students an article about a restaurant where typical foods are prepared after the information has been read, the students are asked to perform a role play.

3.5.2 Instruments to assess the intervention

3.5.2.1 Observation

During the application of the strategies stated to address the problem under investigation, an observation was carried out again to determine if those strategies contribute to get the objectives of this research. The observation aimed to collect important details about the students' academic performance while they are been exposing to the strategies.

3.5.2.2 Post- test

Once the strategies to address the problem were applied, the students carried out a post- test with the purpose of analyzing the impact of the strategies proposed. A post-test is defined as "a test given as "a test given after a lesson or a period of instruction to determine what the students have learne

d" (The American Heritage of the English Language dictionary, 2016). The aim of applying this instrument is to determine if there was or not improvement in the students' vocabulary and comprehension of English as a foreign language.

3.5.2.3 Survey

A teachers' survey was applied to know important details and personal opinions about the students' level of vocabulary and comprehension of the English language, also if the use of playful reading strategies helps or not to improve students' vocabulary and comprehension of English as a foreign language. A survey is defined as a quantitative and qualitative instrument where the variables of interest are measured using self-reports and a considerable attention is paid to the issue of sampling (Converse, 1987).

CHAPTER IV

Findings

4.1 Data Analysis

Based on the purpose of this research, different instruments were used to collect significant facts. A deep analysis of the provided data by the population in this study, and their teacher is presented underneath. It involves important details about the students' academic performance after being exposed to games when learning English as a foreign language. Besides, it takes into account the teachers' point of view about how playful activities contribute to the learning-teaching process, and the way they are used or not in the classroom. In addition, this stage was critical to comprehend the usefulness of games when teaching a foreign language.

4.1.1 Analysis based on the observation while the students performed the activities proposed in this investigation.

After the strategies were applied to the students, the most important details are untaken below. Most of the activities were useful for the students to understand vocabulary and comprehend language; however, there are some important aspects to be mentioned along this paper. For example, contests were effective to get all the students immersed in the activity, make them interact with their classmates and acquire new vocabulary; nevertheless, several explanations were needed to make students understand the instructions. The second activity was drawing what they had read, the majority of the pupils did it, but some students had problems doing it. Regarding the true or false activity, it was necessary to explain very well to the students which are main and secondary ideas to make them get the most important details from the reading. However, some of the students had difficulties to show oral answers, they looked ashamed

of pronouncing, but repeating after the teacher pupils were able to complete the task. Activity number four was the use of debate, they were able to do it because it was very well organized and the topic was very easy; nonetheless; any topic is not appropriate to them because they do not handle the speaking skill. Referring to technique number five, some students had complications when creating statements; they were able to do it if some of their classmates helped them. Activity number six was asking questions, this was so hard for them, the majority of them had difficulties, they had vast grammatical deficiencies, and teachers' guide was needed to help them get the goal of the activity. Memory games and role plays were interesting activities for them; they got the objectives of the exercises with their classmates' help.

Referring to the observation criteria, the majority of students did not show any understanding of language when listening; they also faced difficulties to answer oral and written questions. Most of them did not understand specific details when listening, answering questions, and applying words correctly. They were unable to carry out assignments understanding specific information and using proper vocabulary. Taking into account all the participants in this study, a minority of them were successful when getting the tasks previously mentioned (See annex 2).

4.1.2 Analysis built on the post- test applied to tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente in San Ramón. (See Annex 4)

Graph 1: Reading Comprehension
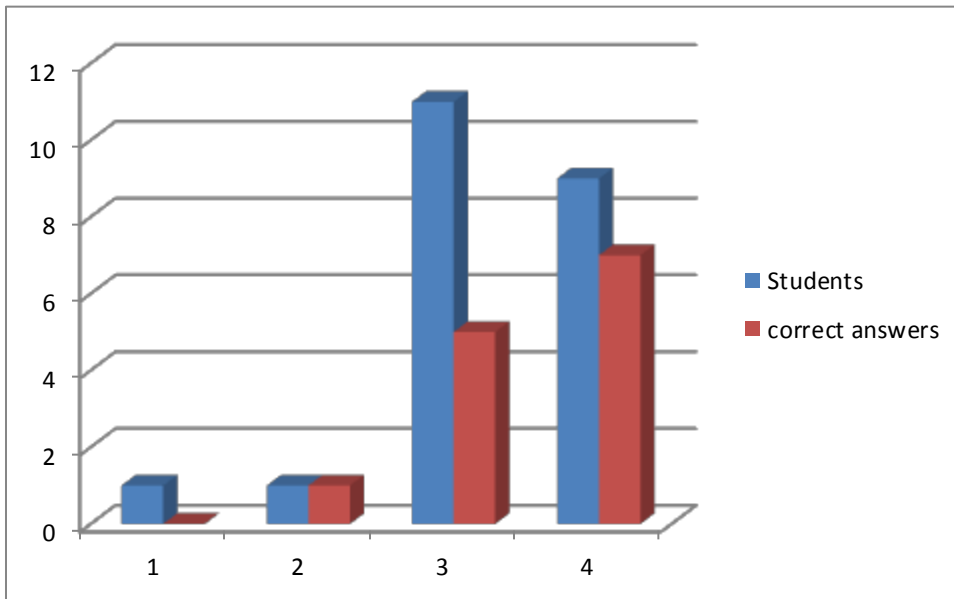
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

According to the graph above, two of the students had problems referring to reading comprehension. As it is noticed in the graph, there was a student who did not get any correct answer, while the second student got one correct answer. Eleven pupils got the majority of the answers correctly and the remaining nine students got all of them. (See Annex 4).

Graph 2: Simple Present Tense
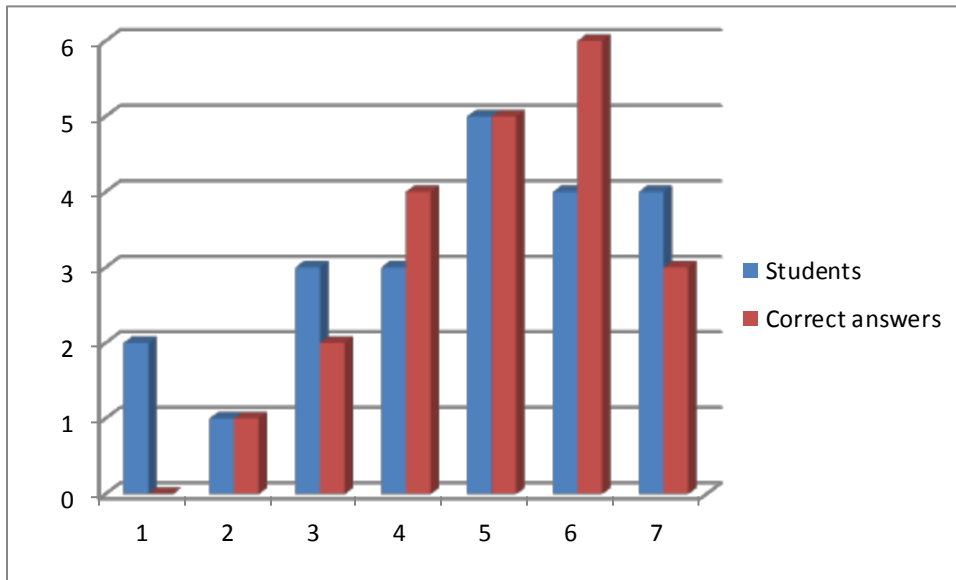
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

As the graph represents, six students had difficulties regarding simple present tense. They had problems in general with the conjugation of the verbs regarding the use of personal pronouns. Two of the students had difficulties; they did not get any correct answer. Four learners got correctly the minority of the answers, considering they got one and two answers. Four students got half of the correct answers. Eight learners got the majority of the answers suitably, and the remaining four students got all of them (See Annex 4).

Graph 3: Personal information questions

Legend:
- 22
- Correct answers
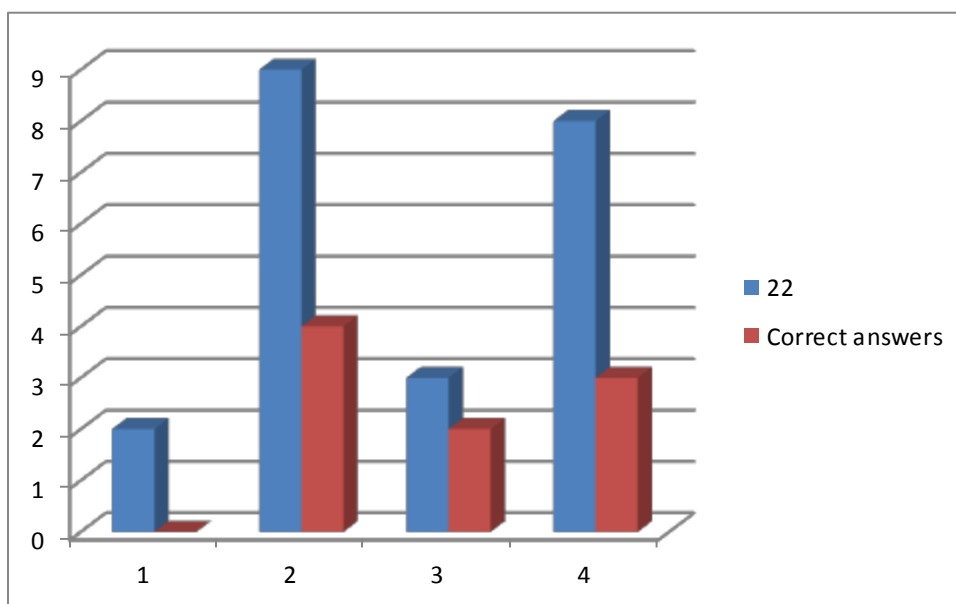
Source: Tenth grade students from Liceo Julian Volio Llorente

The graph shows a personal information question exercise of four questions concerning short answer. As the graph reveals, two of the students presented problems, they did not have correct answers. Three students had a little bit more difficulties. Eight students got the majority of the answers accurately and a majority of students got all the answers (See Annex 4).

4.1.1 Analysis of the survey applied to the English teacher (See Annex 3)

1. Do you have any favorite teaching strategy to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension? Explain in detail?

Based on the answer given by the teacher, she stated that she does not have a specific strategy to improve vocabulary and comprehension because the students' level makes it difficult to work with any specific technique, her strategies depend on the students' needs and the studied topic. However, when she teaches vocabulary, she applies different

strategies based on the students' comprehension of language. She means, students repeat vocabulary to learn pronunciation, if words are unknown for them, she uses mimics or gestures to help them guess the meaning of the word. If students do not understand after mimicry or gestures, drawings on the board are used. If they do not understand, the teacher uses the translation method, by asking them if someone knows the meaning of the word, in order to make students translate the word by themselves. If they do not really understand, the teacher translates the word into Spanish. As she expresses, most of the time, students are able to guess the meaning after applying the strategies mentioned before. She also uses power point presentations, videos, and role plays. When teaching reading comprehension, each student is asked to read a sentence and try to guess the meaning of complicated words into the statement (See Annex 3).

2. What of the following strategies have you used when teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension?
    a. ____ Activating and using prior knowledge
    b. ____ Making and asking questions
    c. ____ Summarizing
    d. ____ Drawing
    e. ____ Role play
    f. ____ Guessing meaning from context
    g. ____ Using gestures, mimics or games
    h. ____ Locating key words or main ideas

i. ___Memory games

j. ___Storytelling

k. ___Contests

l. ___ True or false

Considering the answer given by the teacher , the teacher cited that she uses a set of strategies when teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension, those strategies are making and asking questions, role play, guessing meaning from context, gestures and mimics, locating key words and true or false (See Annex 3).

3. Do you consider your students have a good level of proficiency in English? Why?

According to the teacher, students do not have a good level in English, they have problems mainly in pronunciation, reading comprehension, and speaking. In regards to the beginning of this scholar year, they have presented a little improvement in reading comprehension and acquisition of vocabulary (See Annex 3).

4. What is the impact students' lack of vocabulary and reading comprehension has on students' academic performance?

Regarding the information provided by the teacher, there is an impact because of the students' lack of vocabulary and comprehension; students only are ready to pass an exam. Huge deficiencies are present in speaking because they have just three lessons per week, and their lack of vocabulary

is notable. Students' performance is well; they handle the topics. When ending the scholar year, students' might have a little bit more management of vocabulary (See Annex 3).

5. How do your students feel about learning English?

Based on the teachers' point of view, maybe two of the students are really interested on learning English. The rest of the class just wants to pass the scholar year (See Annex 3).

4.2   Restatement of questions and discussion of results

Certainly learning a foreign language is a difficult process for students and teachers. Considering the results of this assignment, there is no doubt teachers and students are responsible of the progress in their classrooms. With the aim of getting the objectives expected in this investigation, outstanding details are presented to provide the relation between the research questions of this study and the results found along the research process.

The use of appropriate strategies helps teachers to teach students new words, and it aids students to improve in vocabulary and comprehension of language. If students are consistent when practicing new vocabulary, they will be fluent in English.

Based on the analysis of the applied instruments and the collected information, there are useful strategies to make students improve in vocabulary

and comprehension of language as the strategies mentioned in the previous pages.

There exist different factors to encourage students' acquisition of language. For example, applying strategies to get the students involved in the activities. As it is known, students' interaction is really important in the acquisition of a foreign language. Getting immerse in the activities, learners improve in speaking and listening.

Considering the results found in this study, students face obstacles mainly regarding listening, speaking and reading comprehension because of their lack of vocabulary. To overcome this problem, it has been cleared along this study that the use of playful activities helps teachers in their teaching process to make students acquire language. It also helps students to get language naturally, to improve their vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Chapter V

Reflections

5.1 Reflections on feelings and experiences

Relating to the experiences and feelings teachers face in their classrooms because their students' lack of vocabulary, there is no doubt vocabulary is really important in the acquisition of a foreign language and learners' effective communication in English. As it was noticed along this study, there were major problems regarding pronunciation, reading comprehension and speaking. These problems suit into the major factors to make learners not interested in learning English as a foreign language. As a matter of fact, speaking is the main barrier because learners feel edgy to speak in English and also to be wrong when pronouncing or applying grammatical structures. As a result, students lack of fluency when speaking, and teachers become frustrated of applying huge techniques without getting their goal.

Something that catches a lot of attention falls on the importance of helping students improving vocabulary. That also   progresses in students' listening skills and understanding of language. In order to address into this aspect in a future study, it would be significant to research about new and innovative strategies to help students improve their vocabulary. For instance, teachers might apply the use of technological devices to encourage students to learn English.

Most time teachers use traditional methods in their classrooms, maybe if facilitators will change a little bit the way they teach their students, they will get a little improvement in the students' academic performance and acquisition of language.

5.2 Plan for further action

With the aim of analyzing the aspects to improve if this project is applied again, it was realized that it is really important to research into the students' interests to design activities that catch their attention, and motivate them to learn English. Also, the application of technological tools will be significant in the acquisition of vocabulary.

Another important aspect to take into account for future plans will be to investigate into the students' point of view about the strategies their teacher uses to teach English. It means, it is important to have a prior knowledge of the activities students like the most.

Finally, it will be important to look for strategies to make pupils understand the importance of learning English.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusions

6.1 Outcomes

According to this study, there is no doubt about the importance of using games when teaching English for easing the acquisition of vocabulary.

The use of playful activities provided a good environment to work with the students, get them involved in the process and improve their competence and performance in English.

There was an understanding of the importance of knowing students' interests and learning styles before applying activities to teach vocabulary and reading comprehension.

It was determined the importance of knowing and monitor students' level of vocabulary and reading comprehension before the application of a project. Thus, activities must be designed according to the students' level of understanding.

It was noted the significance of changing the way English has been taught over the years. Activities must be focused on students' needs. For instance, teachers must adapt activities according to what learners need to hand not according to the objectives of the course.

6.2 Implications

Retaking the research question stated in this study, there are huge strategies to help students gain language. However, there are not specific strategies to get scholars very well trained in the acquisition of language. Students' progress depends on individual abilities and effort. For instance, if apprentices are exposed

to language and practice more time, it will be easier for them to improve in vocabulary and comprehension. On the contrary, they would fail.

This research would be a good tool for teachers to reflect on the effect of using games to improve students' vocabulary and comprehension. Based on the results of this study, this project will help teachers to put in practice activities they maybe have never used in their teaching process.

6.3 Strengths

Primary sources of this research were disposed to contribute with the projects' development. Thus, it was possible to get the purpose of this research.

The teacher in charge of tenth grade students involved in this research was committed with the project, and the performance of activities in her classroom. She was also minded to provide useful information to support this study.

Learners interacted among them to get the aim of the assignments, and they were willing to develop the activities and answer the instruments to collect information.

The activities were designed to involve the whole group in the activities, so students' interaction played an important role in the collection of evidence to support this work.

The activities got the students' attention and they were useful to determine if there were improvement or not in the students vocabulary and reading comprehension.

6. 4 Limitations

It was difficult to determine students' level of vocabulary in general since this project was applied only to one group of tenth grade students.

Even though the students participated actively in the activities, not all of them were really interested in learning.

Students feared to pronounce or speak in English was another limitation; they refused to do it without help.

CHAPTER 7

Recommendations

Teachers must be willing to face challenges in their classrooms and innovators, so that activities vary to motivate and integrate students in the teaching-learning process.

Teachers must integrate activities to provide students acquisition of vocabulary and reading comprehension, and monitor their progress to reinforce their weaknesses if required.

Teachers must have in mind, the need to know their students' academic performance when developing activities to make them get the objectives properly.

For developing students' vocabulary and reading comprehension abilities, teachers must be worried about their student´s interest and learning styles, so they can encourage students to participate and learn English.

To make students' aware of the importance of learning English teachers must strive on different innovative strategies to make them interested in learning English.

It would be important for future plans to apply the project with all students involved in tenth grade.

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Appendix

Estimado estudiante el presente instrumento es un diagnostico diseñado con el propósito de determinar el nivel de vocabulario y la comprensión del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera. El principal objetivo es identificar el nivel de desempeño del estudiante en área de inglés con el propósito de identificar estrategias lúdicas que ayuden al estudiante a mejorar su vocabulario y comprensión.

Los datos proporcionados serán utilizados de forma confidencial y únicamente para efectos de esta investigación.

Diagnostic Test/ Pre-test

Liceo Julian Volio Lorente

Departamento de ingles

Nombre del investigador: kathia Alfaro Jiménez

Date : _____   Gender: _____   Points: 31

Part I. Multiple Choice. (15 Points) 1pt each correct answer.

A**.** Read the information below. Put an X on the letter that has the option that better completes each statement. (6 pts)

1. The second month of the year we celebrate _____.
A) Columbus day
B) February
C) Saint Valentine's day
D) New year's day

2. People go to the processions on _____.
A) Columbus day
B) Holy week
C) Death day
D) Independence day

3. Mother´s day is celebrated _____.
A) On December
B) The second month of the year
C) The eighth month of the year
D) The second week of June

4. On this holiday typical food is eaten_____.
A) Independence day
B) Mother's day
C) Father's day
D) Death day

5. Students run the torch and attend to the light parade _____.
A) When they finish school
B) For the annexation day
C) On Easter
D) For the independence day

6. People take their day off and public services are closed to celebrate
A) Labor's day
B) father's day
C) Mothers' day
D) Black Friday

B. Read the given text, and put an X on the correct answer. Only one option is correct. (4 pts)

HOLIDAYS

There are many types of holidays in our country. Some are religious, others are patriotic. The most important religious ones are virgin of the Angels Day and Christmas. People love them because most people celebrate them with their families. It is on August 2. People walk to Cartago the day before to thank the Virgin for the favors given. They go to church there to pray and sing.

At Christmas people celebrate by singing beautiful carols, buying gifts and preparing delicious food. They are very happy.

1. The first holiday mentioned is celebrated at / in _____.
   a) stores
   b) August
   c) Christmas
   d) December

2. People celebrate _____ with special food.
   a) Christmas Day
   b) Patriotic Holidays
   c) Religious Holidays
   d) Virgin of the Angels Day

3. One common feature of these two holidays is that they involve _____.
   a) parades
   b) patriotism
   c) the family
   d) pilgrimages

4. The holiday dedicated to the Virgin is to show _____.
   a) presents
   b) gratitude
   c) patriotism
   d) happiness

C. Choose the appropriate greeting, leave taking or introduction according to the information below. (5pts)

1. At night a formal leave taking is _____
   a) Bye
   b) Good night
   c) Hello
   d) Hi

2. This is a formal greeting you can use in the morning _____
   a) Hi
   b) Hello
   c) Good morning
   d) See you later

3. An informal leave taking is _____
   a) Bye
   b) Hello
   c) Good night
   d) Nice to meet you

4. We can use this expression to introduce a person _____
   a) This is my Maria
   b) How are you?
   c) See you soon
   d) Good afternoon

5. The following is an informal greeting _____
   a) Hello
   b) Good night
   c) Good morning
   d) This is my friend

Part II. Short answer. Answer the following questions with your own personal information. (5 pts)

1. What is your favorite hobby?
_____

2. What color is your hair?
_____

3. Where are you from?
_____

4. How old are you?
_____

5. Where do you live?
_____

B. Complete the text with the appropriate form of the verb to be. (5 pts)

This is my friend Oscar. He _____ from Alajuela. He has two brothers. They _____

Mario and Carlos. We _____ at Jorge Washington school. Mario is a tennis player too. He _____ tall. He has a little sister. She _____ a baby.

Part III. Restrictive Answer. (6pts)

Describe how you celebrate Christmas. Include where you celebrate, who you celebrate with, what you eat, date and activities you carry out.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

Annex 2

Classroom Observation Criteria :					
Tenth grade students at Liceo Julian Volio Llorente					
	5	**4**	**3**	**2**	**1**
1. The students show understanding of the language when listening and reading.					
2. The Students answer questions with no difficulty in oral and written.					
3. The students understand specific details when listening and answering questions.					
4. The students apply the words correctly according to a given specific situation.					
5. The students carry out the tasks understanding specific information and using correct vocabulary.					
5 = Always 4 = Frequently 3 = sometimes 2 = Rarely 1 = Never Comments:					

Dear English Teacher:

This study is about the process of teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension through the application of playful reading strategies. The aim of applying this instrument is to collect information to support the hypothesis proposed in this research. The provided answers will be confidential and used only for this investigation.

Survey

Liceo Julian Volio Lorente

English Department

Researcher's Name: kathia Alfaro Jiménez

Date : _____   Gender: _____

1. Do you have any favorite teaching strategy to improve vocabulary and reading comprehension? Explain in detail?

2. What of the following strategies have you used when teaching vocabulary and reading comprehension?

   a. ____Activating and using prior knowledge

   b. ____Making and asking questions

   c. ____Summarizing

   d. ____Drawing

   e. ____Role play

   f. ____Guessing meaning from context

   g. ____Using gestures, mimics or games

   h. ____Locating key words or main ideas

   i. ____Memory games

   j. ____Storytelling

   k. ____Contests

   l. ____ True or false

3. Do you consider your students have a good level of proficiency in English? Why?

4. What is the impact students' lack of vocabulary and reading comprehension has on students' academic performance?

5. How do your students feel about learning English?

Estimado estudiante el presente instrumento es un diagnostico diseñado con el propósito de determinar el nivel de vocabulario y la comprensión del idioma inglés como lengua extranjera. El principal objetivo es identificar el nivel de desempeño del estudiante en área de inglés con el propósito de identificar estrategias lúdicas que ayuden al estudiante a mejorar su vocabulario y comprensión.

Los datos proporcionados serán utilizados de forma confidencial y únicamente para efectos de esta investigación.

Diagnostic Test/ Post-Test

Liceo Julian Volio Lorente

Departamento de ingles

Nombre del investigador: kathia Alfaro Jiménez

Date : _____   Gender: _____   Points: 17

Part I. SHORT ANSWER. 7pts

A. Read the following text carefully, and fill in the blanks the missing information.

Eating to live
Eating a balanced diet is essential for being healthy. Humans should eat a lot of fruits and vegetables every day. We should also eat some other products like rice, cereal, pastas, and drink some milk. Those who do not like milk can eat yogurt, cheese or drink orange juice. People must avoid eating too much meat and sugar. Cookies, chocolates and candies contain a lot of this ingredient, and make people suffer from illnesses such as diabetes when they abuse of its consumption. We must avoid eating a lot of them.

1. The following are two products people should include in a balanced diet _____ and_____.

2. According to the text these are three dairy products people should eat to be healthy _____, _____ and _____.

3. Two unhealthy products people should not eat every day are the following ones _____ and _____.

PART II. SHORT ANSWER. (6 points)
Read carefully what is requested and complete with the appropriate form of the verbs in simple present tense.

1-I _____ a letter.   (read)

2-She _____ science.   (like)

3-They _____ England twice a year.   (visit)

4-He _____ in the park.   (run)

5-We _____ fifteen minutes every day   (study)

6-They _____ the computer.   (fix)

Part III. SHORT ANSWER. Answer the following questions with your own personal information. (4 pts)

1- Name some of the most popular typical foods in Costa Rica?

_____

2- What foods do you like?

_____

3- What is the most popular typical beverage in Costa Rica?

_____

4- What sports do you like?

_____