

Enhancing lexical competence in English Language Learning: An Emphasis on writing skill

Fortalecimiento del léxico en el aprendizaje del inglés: un enfoque en la competencia escrita

Melhorando a competência lexical no aprendizado do idioma inglês: uma ênfase na habilidade de escrever

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ABSTRACT

Academic performance in acquiring English vocabulary is closely tied to the quality of teaching within educational institutions. Therefore, the objective was to identify the lexical skills of ninth-grade basic education students through a linguistic corpus to strengthen vocabulary acquisition, as well as collect information from English teachers regarding the methodology and practices used in class related to vocabulary development. In the creation of the textual linguistic corpus, lexical variety, semantic context, and formal and informal vocabulary were analysed to identify student errors in writing. For the formulation of the corpus question, the ninth-grade English textbook was considered, specifically Unit 1's theme, with the purpose of analysing knowledge levels relative to the students' academic grade. In this sense, the question was: "Write about individual characteristics, daily routines, and activities you do in your free time." Precise results were obtained in their writing, later revealing the most common shortcomings. The methodological data gathered through interviews focused on analysing how English teachers structure their classroom instruction, including their use of gamification tools to enhance engagement, strategies for evaluating vocabulary, the incorporation of metacognition to foster students' self-



awareness in learning, and methods for assessing acquired knowledge to measure academic progress.

KEYWORDS: Vocabulary; difficulty in learning; writing; teaching method.

RESUMEN

El rendimiento académico en la adquisición de vocabulario del idioma inglés es sinónimo de calidad de enseñanza dentro de las instituciones educativas. Por lo que se planteó como objetivo Identificar las habilidades léxicas de los estudiantes de noveno de educación general básica mediante un corpus lingüístico para fortalecer la adquisición de vocabulario. Así también recopilar información de los docentes de inglés con respecto a la metodología y practicas utilizadas en clase relacionas al desarrollo del vocabulario. En la realización del corpus lingüístico textual se analizaron la variedad léxica, el contexto semántico y vocabulario formal e informal para identificar los errores de los estudiantes en la escritura. Para la formulación de la pregunta a realizar en el corpus lingüístico se tomó en cuenta el libro de inglés de noveno con la temática de la unidad uno, donde la finalidad es analizar el nivel de conocimiento en relación con su nivel de grado académico, en este sentido la pregunta fue; escriba características individuales, rutina diaria y lo que realizan en su tiempo libre. Se pudo obtener resultados precisos en la redacción de este, para posteriormente evidenciar las falencias más comunes. Por otra parte, en la recopilación de información de la metodología empleando la entrevista se analizó como llevan a cabo el desarrollo de la clase los docentes de inglés, la utilización de herramientas de gamificación, la evaluación de vocabulario, la aplicación de la metacognición, y como evalúan el conocimiento adquirido los estudiantes.

PALABRAS CLAVE Vocabulario; dificultad en el aprendizaje; escritura; método de enseñanza.

RESUMO

Desempenho acadêmico na aquisição de vocabulário de inglês é sinônimo de qualidade de ensino nas instituições educacionais. Para tanto, estabeleceu-se como objetivo identificar as habilidades lexicais de estudantes do 9º ano do Ensino Fundamental por meio de um corpus linguístico, visando fortalecer a aquisição de vocabulário. Realizou-se também um levantamento junto aos professores de inglês sobre as metodologias e práticas utilizadas em sala de aula relacionadas ao desenvolvimento do vocabulário. Na construção do corpus linguístico textual, analisaram-se: a variedade lexical, o contexto semântico e o uso de vocabulário formal e informal, buscando identificar os erros mais comuns na produção escrita dos alunos. A formulação da pergunta para o corpus teve como base o livro didático de inglês do 9º ano (Tema: Unidade 1), visando analisar o nível de conhecimento em relação à série. A pergunta foi: "Escreva sobre características individuais, rotina diária e atividades no tempo livre". Com isso, foi possível obter resultados precisos na análise das redações e evidenciar as deficiências mais recorrentes. Por outro lado, na coleta de dados sobre a metodologia (via entrevistas), analisou-se: como os professores conduzem as aulas, se utilizam ferramentas de gamificação, como avaliam o vocabulário, se aplicam estratégias de metacognição e como verificam o conhecimento adquirido pelos alunos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Vocabulário; dificuldade em aprender; escrita; Método de ensino.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching methodologies have evolved progressively alongside the integration of new technological trends to support cognitive development in learning. Current demands necessitate educational adaptability to these technologies. Today, numerous virtual tools facilitate English language acquisition, making learning more accessible for students. In this sense, learning a second language is relatively easy nowadays. It offers significant advantages, including professional opportunities, academic growth, and the opportunity to travel around the world as a tourist or for work. However, achieving mastery requires developing linguistic skills, particularly vocabulary acquisition and writing competence. It is essential to know how Ecuadorian teachers develop the foregoing.

“Education in Ecuador faces challenges like high illiteracy, low school attendance, frequent grade repetition, high dropout rates, poor-quality teaching, and inadequate infrastructure and learning materials” (La EPJA En Ecuador: El Último Eslabón de la Educación, 2023, parag. 2). Many schools still rely on outdated teaching methods for languages like English, resulting in dull classes, slow progress and student disengagement. Additionally, students rarely interact in real-life settings to practice communication skills or expand their vocabulary. Often, they learn limited words without enough practice or motivation to grasp their practical uses. As Gutiérrez note that “Motivation and enjoyment are key factors that tend to improve after implementing new strategies” (Gutiérrez et al., 2023, p.14).

De la Maya Retamar, y López-Pérez (2020) state that:

The increase in lexicon is strongly related to success in both oral and written comprehension, and, although to a lesser extent, to oral comprehension. It is precisely on the oral side of the language that the work by Hilton is centred, which highlights the relationship between lexical knowledge and fluency in a language, so that the more words one knows, the more fluency one has in speech. (p. 3)

The capacity to understand a second language and engage in suitable communication is based on the lexicon and the four competences, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening. However, it is closely related to reading and writing. To assess the vocabulary levels of ninth-grade students, we utilised a linguistic corpus.

Sierra (2021) claims:

Several educational studies have examined the relationship between structural linguistic complexity and reading comprehension. To do this, they

either use computer systems with built-in complexity measures (such as Korpus or Lexile) or establish their criteria; based on these, they determine a text's complexity level and analyse how this variable affects the processes of reading comprehension. (p.3)

This investigation aims to determine the students' lexicon level and identify any potential areas of struggle.

DEVELOPMENT

WRITING SKILL

English has four fundamental skills that can be classified as productive and receptive. Reading and listening are considered receptive skills because, when practising them, the student receives and understands ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Whereas writing and speaking are productive skills, meaning the student creates and expresses ideas and concepts.

Writing is difficult for most students because they must focus on several important points such as punctuation, vocabulary, grammar and the order of words. It is essential to connect ideas logically to write an excellent paragraph; this process is called coherence. It helps to express yourself clearly and understandably. Coherence and cohesion are essential elements that enable students to write effectively. Whether a student dominates these elements, they can communicate their message and express themselves adequately. Cohesion helps the reader understand the relationship between what has already been written, what is being written now, and what will be written next. It is an essential feature of a coherent text because cohesion creates coherence, which in turn provides semantic unity across sentences and paragraphs. Chicho (2022) points out “the cohesion and coherence devices can be used for collecting related words, phrases, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs” (p.30).

COHERENCE

ANALYSE LITERARY CONTEXTS

It is a factor that allows second language students to enhance their writing skills. As Abdalrahman (2021) emphasises:

When reading a literary text, learners will acquire the grammatical structures, constructions, unity, and coherence unconsciously. Sometimes, learners will imitate the writing style of a writer as a model for their writing. Leal explained that learners could use a literary text as a model for understanding the grammar, structure, and vocabulary. (p. 5)

It is widely considered that literature and writing are closely related to learning a second language, making it essential to incorporate them into a learning environment.

USING LEXICAL CHAIN

These are features related to the poor use of language, which are everyday struggles that some students face. As Abdalrahman (2021) explains:

Interpreted lexical chains as a chain of semantically related ideas, and that chain does not depend on the grammatical structure of a text. The chain captures lexical cohesion, highlighting repeated relative ideas in a text. There are more different ways of categorising semantically related lexical items. This study focuses on three of them: exact, synonyms, and semantic. The writers repeat the nouns exactly, use synonyms, and employ nouns that belong to the same semantic tree and are related to each other. (p.4)

To delve into the use of lexical chains, it is essential to grasp the language, as well as the grammatical structures and vocabulary.

To develop a cohesive text, the following factors should be considered: reference, substitution, ellipsis and conjunction.

According to Chicho (2022), “Reference means referring to an element that cannot be interpreted if you do not refer to it with another word semantically. There are referring devices such as comparatives, demonstratives, articles and pronouns. (p. 5) In this way, there are two references: one prompts the reader to look beyond the text Infer, and the second allows the reader to see everything in the text, making inference or interpretation unnecessary.

The substitution involves replacing a word with another word in the text to provide grammatical cohesion. Students use this method to avoid repetition of words. Chicho (2022) claims that “substitution means the connection between words, but reference connects the meanings not words. There are three types: clausal: replaces clauses with “so” or “not”; verbal: replacing a verb with another verb; and nominal: replacing a noun with another noun.” (p.6) Writers use substitutions to avoid repetition.

The third factor is ellipses, which make the writing process understandable, as Chicho (2022) states:

Ellipses indicate that words are omitted, as they are not necessary to be repeated in the text. Ellipses help the writer avoid repeating words that were written earlier in the text. By omitting these words, the sentences will be

more concise. Scholars have considered them as anaphoric substitutions because the omitted words are within the text. Ellipses do not damage the passage because the deleted word from the text can still deliver the meaning. (p.7)

Conjunctions connect logically related sentences or clauses in a logical order, making it easier for the reader to understand the text.

The last factor is conjunctions, according to Chicho (2022):

Conjunctions can be categorised into four types: temporal, adversative, causal, and additive. Temporal conjunctions provide the time order of actions and events in a text or paragraph, for example, first, second, finally, at the same time, etc. Adversative conjunctions in a text contrast results or opinions. This type of conjunction occurs by words, for example, “but, in contrast, whereas”, etc. Causal conjunctions are used to illustrate results, reasons, or purposes. They usually use the words: as, so, thus, therefore, because, etc. Finally, additive conjunctions link units or statements that share similarities. For instance, are, and, likewise, furthermore, in addition, etc. (p.7)

WRITING ANXIETY

Aloairdhi (2019, as cited in Chicho, 2022) noted that writing anxiety (WA) originates from foreign language anxiety (FLA), and that the fear of making mistakes increases students' anxiety levels. Blasco (2016, as cited in Chicho, 2022) stated that there is a strong relationship between WA and metacognitive skills; therefore, for a productive writing task, students need to learn to cope with this anxiety. Barzani and Meena (2022, as cited in Chicho, 2022) suggest the use of authentic materials in the classroom, and Meena (2020, as cited in Chicho, 2022) recommends cooperative learning to overcome these anxieties. (Chicho, 2022, p.8)

ABUSES OF TRANSITION WORDS

Siddiqui (2020, as cited in Chicho, 2022) found that the overuse of transition words is one factor that negatively affects paragraph clarity and organisation. He claimed that if learners do not have a clear opening, they cannot provide focused supporting details—instead, they keep writing long sentences overloaded with “and,” “also,” “so,” and “then.” Moreover, a lack of transitions or the use of very few transition words reflects students' difficulty in constructing a unified and well-organised paragraph. (Chicho, 2022, p.8)

TEACHING AND LEARNING WRITING SKILLS THROUGH LITERATURE

Literature encourages students to grasp the four abilities of language. There is a wealth of literature, including poems, novels, dramatic works, and more. These works require the reader's attention and participation, as well as their thoughts and emotions, to enhance their lexicon. Abdalrahman (2021) points out, "As language instructors, literature should be integrated in the activities inside and outside the classroom to engage the learners effectively. When learners learn the taste of literary masterpieces, they will seek more and become independent learners" (p.4). Based on the foregoing literature, authentic works are essential materials that enhance student learning, making them the best choice for implementation in writing classes.

LITERATURE IN VOCABULARY

Instructors can use literature to teach and learn new words. Ismail Y Sharan (2020) claimed that "learners read literature; they fling into it. They delve deeper to understand the meaning of the lexical items in the text. This can lead to beneficial effects in learning. As such, literature becomes a source of grammar and linguistic rules" (p. 274). It is essential to incorporate literary texts into the learning process to develop productive language skills in a second language and refine vocabulary.

Abdalrahman (2021) claims:

Language instructors should explain the concepts of denotation and connotation to learners. On the one hand, denotation refers to the literal or dictionary meaning of words. On the other hand, connotation refers to the emotive meaning that includes implications, associations, and suggestions that words convey when they are taken out of the text and placed in their historical, socio-cultural, and political contexts. (p.4)

Instructors must teach vocabulary as an essential part of second-language learning for two key reasons: it boosts reading comprehension by exposing learners to new words, and it enables smoother, more fluent writing. Having a wide-ranging vocabulary is essential for crafting coherent sentences, paragraphs, and texts, since learners must understand both the meanings and proper usages of words. Without this foundation, reading becomes challenging and directly undermines the quality of their writing.

CORPUS AND LEXICON LEARNING

In the process of Learning and teaching a second language, a corpus has played a fundamental role in two critical ways. Firstly, as a research tool, they have facilitated the elaboration of dictionaries and grammar that reflect the natural

evolution of the language. Secondly, in the design of teaching materials, a corpus provides real data that reflects the actual use of language. Thus, they act like a database that allows us to get representative and realistic language samples.

Recent studies on corpus-based error analysis show interesting results that intertwine diverse error types. For instance, Divsar and Heydari (2017) categorize several error types in essays written by Iranian English as a foreign language student, identifying word choice as the most common error. Students selected words without considering contextual appropriateness and spelling errors. Alike, Botley et al. (2007) focused on spelling errors using the CALES corpus, which contains English essays from students at two Malaysian universities. They classified errors into predefined categories but also created new ones based on their findings. The authors discuss potential reasons for these errors and suggest preventive strategies. (Alcaraz, 2023, p.136)

VOCABULARY-BASED LEARNING

Vocabulary-based learning is a fundamental part of acquiring a new language. Developing a plentiful and varied vocabulary enables students to communicate more effectively, both in writing and speaking, and helps them understand texts and speeches in a second language. To learn new vocabulary effectively, it is essential to study words in their context, whether in complete sentences or stories.

Alcaraz (2023) states:

Learning vocabulary is not an “all-or-nothing” phenomenon. In fact, it is a gradual, complex, and dynamic process. In which the nature of the word and the human condition are determinants. Everything here is essential from a didactic perspective. It is proposed to adopt the word as a functional unit when teaching vocabulary. Nevertheless, the word, understood as a functional unit, involves the concept of a motto, namely taking account of derived and reflexive forms (for instance, run, running, ran) that help us to arrange the curriculum content. (p.54)

This approach fosters a deeper and more adaptable understanding of vocabulary among students.

GAME-BASED LEARNING

Cornella et al. (2020) state that Game-Based Learning (GBL) aims to “use games to learn through them. The game becomes a vehicle for learning. During the game, the teacher can reflect on what is happening and the content being addressed” (p. 5). Indeed, GBL motivates students to understand any topic, and with the participation of teachers, learning becomes more effective.

Ripoll y Pujolá (2024) suggest:

Game-based learning incorporates games in educational contexts to enhance the achievement of the learning goals. These games can be board games, outdoor games, escape rooms or video games. According to their purpose, they can be adapted for the educational field to improve students' competencies or designed explicitly for a pedagogical purpose from the outset. In GBL, teachers must carry out an informed selection of games, ensuring that they are coherent with the students' learning goals. This is a pedagogical approach that integrates games into the didactic process. (p.19)

To grasp how game-based learning works and determine in which circumstances to apply it. It is essential to have a structured narrative for both digital and physical games. From start to finish, the primary purpose must be learning specific content, such as a topic, grammar, or vocabulary. In general terms, GBL represents learning through play.

GAMIFICATION

Gamification involves designing learning experiences to be experienced as a game. Suppose the goal of gamification is to influence someone's motivation to encourage specific behaviour. In that case, the user should be at the core of the definition and mindset of those designing a gamified action. To gamify is to create game-like experiences in non-playful environments. The player's enjoyment measures the effectiveness of gamification during the process (Cornella et al., 2020, p. 12).

Behind these words lies a powerful idea: the primary goal of applying gamification is to make the end user feel as though they are participating in an experience akin to a game.

According to Jara and Montoya (2022, as cited in Valencia, 2023), gamification, a methodological approach in the educational system, involves applying game elements to enhance learners' motivation, promote meaningful learning, and foster engagement. It has been demonstrated to be an effective tool for improving the learning process by incorporating game elements, such as points, achievements, and challenges, thereby enabling a more active and innovative approach to learning. Additionally, using educational games, such as platforms, applications, and video games, can significantly increase comprehension and retention of information (p. 33).

Gamification is not defined as a pedagogical approach, but rather as an instructional strategy that can be precisely tailored to any framework we establish for our teaching. Thus, we can gamify a flipped classroom

approach, a more traditional lecture-based model, problem-based learning, or a task-based approach. In all these frameworks, gamified proposals can be designed by incorporating the necessary game elements in each case (Ripoll & Pujola, 2024, p. 19).

2. STUDY SETTING AND PARTICIPANT GROUP

The Bolívar Educational Unit operates in Tulcán, Carchi Province, as a fiscomisional institution serving approximately 1,500 students across two modalities: daytime secondary education and night-time higher education. Core academic disciplines include mathematics, English, literature, and related fields.

POPULATION

This study focuses on ninth-grade Basic General Education students (N = 100). Regarding faculty, the institution employs 105 teachers, with four English-specialised educators participating in structured interviews.

SAMPLING APPROACH

A non-probabilistic cluster sampling method was employed for student selection, while intentional sampling guided teacher participation. Ninth-year students were selected based on their A1 English proficiency level, as defined by Ecuador's National English Curriculum (Ministerio de Educación del Ecuador, 2019) and the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). This linguistic competence alignment ensures that participants are suitable for the research objectives.

Studying employs a descriptive, qualitative approach. Data collection techniques included interviews with teachers, a structured questionnaire, and a writing test designed to create a linguistic corpus for analysing students' most common errors in English vocabulary use.

PROCEDURES

The data gathered through various collection instruments will be processed using coding techniques based on the guidelines established by Strauss and Corbin (1995). The process will begin with data coding, followed by the classification of interrelated codes grouped into categories. Subsequently, discussion themes will be developed to characterise the research problem. The study phases are described below.

Phase 1 focused on collecting information about vocabulary teaching methodologies used by English teachers at the Bolívar Educational Unit, aiming to identify effective strategies to enhance vocabulary acquisition among ninth-year Basic General Education students. This phase examined current knowledge and

teaching practices for English lexical development in ninth-year students at the Bolívar Educational Unit in Tulcán, Carchi. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five English teachers to gain an understanding of their instructional methodologies, strategies, and implementation approaches. Data processing involved systematic transcription and coding of interviews to analyse responses and identify recurring patterns in participants' discourse.

Phase 2 employed a linguistic corpus to compile data from a representative sample of ninth-year students at the Bolívar Educational Unit. This textual corpus, derived from written prompts and student responses, underwent qualitative analysis to identify lexical challenges. The corpus analysis evaluated lexical diversity, semantic contextualization, and formal/informal vocabulary usage to pinpoint writing errors. The prompt design drew from Unit 1 themes in the ninth-year English textbook (personal characteristics, daily routines, leisure activities), aiming to assess vocabulary alignment with academic grade-level expectations. This approach yielded precise results highlighting the most common lexical deficiencies in student writing.

3.OUTCOMES

The following is the analysis derived from the interview. The following categories and subcategories were determined.

Table 1: *Dependent Variable and the categories*

Dependent variable	Meaning	Categories	Subcategories
Vocabulary acquisition	It is the process by which a student learns and retains new words, along with their meanings and usage in different contexts. contexts	Class opening	Prior Knowledge Feedback
		Methodology	Teaching vocabulary through an active methodology. Resources.
		Analysis Vocabulary	Activities for teaching vocabulary

Interviews with the four English teachers highlighted both strategies and constraints. All reported using active methodologies to teach vocabulary. For example, one teacher employs a card matching game (profession + definition) as a form of gamification. Another integrates digital quizzes (Kahoot, LiveWorksheets) alongside listening and reading modules to reinforce pronunciation and

contextualised vocabulary. A third approach uses artistic activities (drawing verbs on the board) and role-playing in pairs to consolidate new words. Despite these efforts, teachers lamented material limitations: lack of internet access, projectors, or functional computer labs restricts consistent use of digital tools. Nevertheless, they foster contextualised feedback—via drawings or gap fill readings—to reinforce misunderstood vocabulary, and they employ reading and rewrite or sub-sentence drills to ensure retention.

CLASS OPENING

The class opening process is the starting point for activating students' prior knowledge. According to the interviewees, in this phase, it helps the students to “remind the students of the previous topic through a dynamic” (t1, t3). Other teachers use the “diagnostic assessment as a starting point to gauge students' current level” (t2). In other cases, they use “motivating words with examples to encourage the students' curiosity” (t4)

Interviewees stated that to assess students' vocabulary, they employ three methods: firstly, “through vocabulary in context” (t1); secondly, “through reading exercises” (t2); and thirdly, “through audio materials” (t4). This information suggests that teachers combine listening and reading competencies to provide feedback on words that students already know before the class begins. This aligns with Montes-Miranda et al.'s (2023) research, which suggests that activating students' prior knowledge helps clarify potential misunderstandings of vocabulary and enhances pronunciation.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

The acquisition of vocabulary in a foreign language involves engaging students through methodologies that lead to meaningful learning. For this, there are multiple processes and activities to follow, especially in an era where Artificial Intelligence (AI) is increasingly embedded in education. Some teachers shared that “...gamification is a good methodology to reinforce students' knowledge through play” (t1). Similarly, another teacher mentioned using technology “...since it helps students, sometimes ...with Duolingo and Liveworksheets...” (t2). However, the didactic process of how these applications are implemented was not explained.

When asked about the educational tools and didactic resources to teach vocabulary, the interviewees demonstrated their understanding of these concepts. For instance, they said that the digital tools that most of them use are “Kahoot and liveworksheets” (t1, t2, t3); and they talked about the resources that they use, in this case, they like to use a laboratory, a projector and speakers.

ANALYSIS VOCABULARY

Regarding vocabulary teaching activities, teachers discussed “isolated words” (t1), “flashcards” (t2), and “role-play activities” (t3). Despite that teachers have several activities in mind, these activities are usually the most common to teach new words, leaving aside the use of ICT as a means to attract attention to the student and promote participation, as well as the use of activities related to the use of vocabulary in a real context that approximates the student to how he could use the new language in real life situation.

LINGUISTIC CORPUS

The analysis of the linguistic corpus is presented. The following aspects to evaluate were determined:

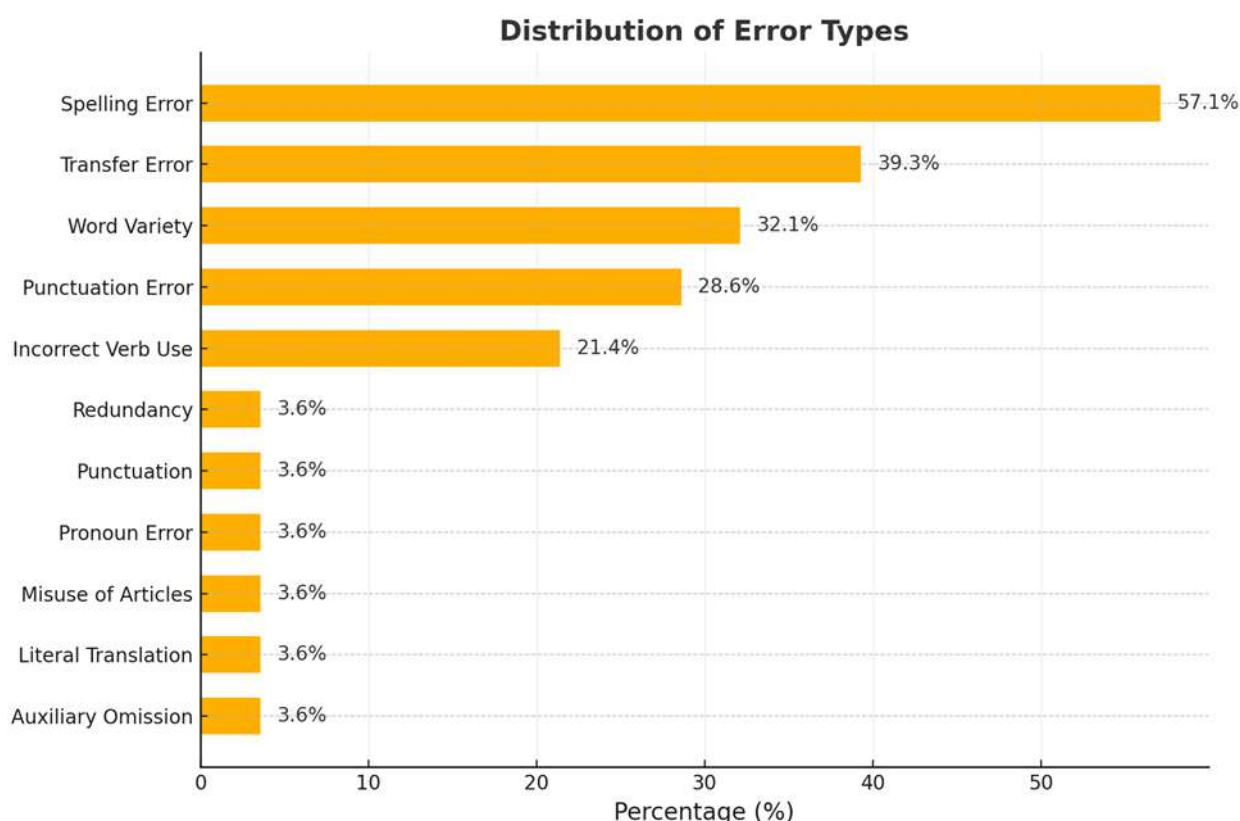
Table 2: *independent variable and the categories*

Independent variable	Meaning	Categories	Subcategories
Lexical skills	It involves the accurate use of semantic structures and relations, as well as an understanding of their communicative contexts and meanings.	Lexical variety	Words application
			Redundancy
		Semantic context	Punctuation errors
		Formal and informal vocabulary	Writing errors

The analysis of the 100 student texts revealed systematic lexical difficulties. First, students demonstrated a minimal lexical range, repeatedly using basic words that often obscured the clarity of their message. Many writings featured unnecessary redundancy, with learners repeating the same adjectives or phrases (e.g. “very very good”) instead of employing synonyms or varied constructions. Frequent semantic errors were observed: words used out of context or with incorrect meanings (for instance, confusing “happy” with “fun” or misapplying prepositions). In addition, punctuation mistakes, such as omitted commas and failure to capitalise sentence beginnings, were common and likely influenced by Spanish orthographic conventions. Students also exhibited confusion between formal and informal registers, using colloquial expressions (“okay,” “yeah,” “dad”) in contexts that

required more formal language. Finally, general writing errors (spelling, subject-verb agreement, verb tense) further undermined paragraph coherence.

Figure 1: *The corpus highlights errors*



LEXICON VARIETY

According to the data, 32.1% of students demonstrated excellent use of vocabulary in writing contexts. In this case, during the writing test, they followed instructions and showcased diverse vocabulary aligned with their educational level. Maya et al. (2020) emphasizes the importance of vocabulary acquisition as a means to write clearly and coherently.

Beyond the central role vocabulary acquisition plays in language learning (Bogaards, 1994; Laufer, 1986; Wilkins, 1974), numerous studies support the significance of vocabulary in language use (Schmitt, 2010). Vocabulary size is also considered an indicator of overall language proficiency: the larger the vocabulary, the higher the competence (Maya et al., 2020).

According to the information displayed in the graphic, punctuation errors occur at a rate of 28,6% which represents that student still overlook the final points and commas—important details in lexical competition.

SEMANTIC CONTEXT

Regarding the graphic, in relation to the semantic context dimension, it can be noted that 39.3% of the students exhibit transfer errors, explicitly using the structure, words, and vocabulary of their mother tongue when learning English. Similarly, according to the graph, 21.4% of the results demonstrate incorrect use of verbs, particularly in the use of the verb "to be" and the use of pronouns.

The study also reveals that 57.1% of students have spelling errors, including misspelt words. This highlights the need to implement teaching strategies that reinforce vocabulary acquisition and correct spelling.

INFORMAL VOCABULARY

This dimension includes errors in articles (e.g., "a," "an," "the"), auxiliary verbs, redundancy, and pronouns. These errors are the least common among students, accounting for only 3.6% of total results. It can be said that ninth-grade students possess basic knowledge of grammatical structures that can be adapted to formal or informal contexts with additional practice.

4. DISCUSSION

The limited lexical variety observed in the writing samples aligns with the instructional strategies employed. Despite teachers' use of playful activities to expand vocabulary, their observations confirm that students tend to reuse a limited set of words. This pattern aligns with previous studies. For instance, Cordero and Martín (2020) found that semantic errors predominate in the written work of EFL learners.

THE FALACY OF CONTEXTUALIZATION

Although 100% of teachers mentioned using contexts (sentences/role-plays), 39.3% of transfer errors reveal that Contexts are artificial or impractical. For example, sentences such as "The firemen in my house" do not reflect honest communication or student interest. Additionally, there is a lack of focus on collocations. Students do not learn "make a mistake" (they say "do a mistake"). This explains the low lexical variety (32.1%).

On the other hand, teachers mentioned using gamification as a strategy to motivate students to practice vocabulary. These approaches align with the pedagogical

literature, which is the body of knowledge on teaching and learning. Zhang and Hasim (2022) report that gamification improves English skills and student motivation. However, they also note technical limitations and short-lived positive effects. In this case, the teachers agreed that the lack of technological resources, such as internet access and projectors, restricts the implementation of advanced digital tools. Additionally, some teachers mentioned using cell phones, the English lab, and apps such as Duolingo and Kahoot. However, these applications do not correct L1 transfer errors, as observed in some cases, such as writing "I have 15 years." Nevertheless, cell phones could be used to record pronunciation and combat the 57.1% spelling error rate.

The impact of innovative methodologies may be limited. Nevertheless, the repetition of oral (role-play) and written exercises (underlining text, writing sentences) in classes reflects an attempt to compensate for technological shortcomings. One teacher mentioned a technique of drawing on the blackboard to make vocabulary explicit. This technique promotes comprehension without relying on devices. These teaching resources are pedagogically justified. The use of images and concrete communicative contexts helps to fix lexical meaning.

Finally, 57.1% of spelling errors among ninth-grade students can be attributed to teachers. Only one teacher uses authentic audio recordings, while the others either ignore or fail to practice English-Spanish phonetic instruction, resulting in errors in writing and pronunciation.

En caso de utilizar tablas y figuras, debe tener en cuenta las siguientes indicaciones:

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study focused on analyzing the lexical skills of ninth-grade students using a linguistic corpus, which enabled the identification of the most frequent errors, particularly spelling and transfer errors. Because of this, it is essential to implement classroom activities that support vocabulary learning not in isolation or through technical drills, but through context, using real-life examples that help students connect new words to their own experiences. The use of technological tools is also encouraged to support this learning process.

Moreover, teaching English within a semantic context is crucial for avoiding literal translations between languages, another issue identified in the results. On a positive note, some students demonstrated a broader vocabulary than expected for their level of study. Overall, the lexical skills of ninth-grade students still demonstrate a basic level of English proficiency.

According to the interviews, most teachers reported using gamification as a key strategy to boost student engagement in learning. Although the school has an English or audiovisual lab, many teachers mentioned that it does not meet their pedagogical needs; therefore, they often utilise their technological resources to deliver lessons, demonstrating a strong personal commitment to the teaching process.

For vocabulary practice, teachers noted that they use role-playing, as it encourages constant interaction in English and introduces new words. This method has proven effective, as students tend to feel more comfortable and enjoy interacting with their classmates. Teachers also reported using word cards, where either the teacher or a student draws a term on the board, creating an active learning environment where students participate in discovering meanings, which has led to positive results in vocabulary acquisition.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, interviews were conducted to gather direct information about the pedagogical practices implemented with ninth-grade students and to identify areas for improvement in teaching and learning. These interviews also offered qualitative insights that enabled a deeper analysis of instructional strategies, the resources employed, and the challenges faced by educators at the Bolívar Educational Unit. This approach provides a detailed understanding of specific problem areas, including spelling and punctuation errors, misuse of vocabulary, and grammatical issues. By analyzing these errors, recurring patterns and common difficulties that students encounter when writing in English can be identified. The resulting linguistic corpus provided valuable data that can be used to design more targeted and effective teaching strategies aimed at improving students' writing and vocabulary skills. Moreover, the continued use of this tool will help monitor students' progress over time and allow instruction to be adjusted to meet their specific needs.

Future research should be conducted. This research should be related to speaking skills. The goal is to strengthen productive skills.

6. DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to this article. They have not received funding or support from any organization or entity that could influence the content of the work.

7. AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1 Conceptualization, Data Curation, Research, Methodology, Visualization, Writing – original draft –, Writing – revision and editing –

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