

Developing Lexical Competence Through Teaching Materials: A Pedagogical Proposal.

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the development of lexical competence through the design and implementation of contextualized teaching materials within a rural bilingual education setting in Colombia. Anchored in the interpretative paradigm and a case study design, the study aims to propose a pedagogical strategy that responds to the sociocultural and linguistic realities of ninth-grade students at the Institución Educativa Plácido Retamoza. The central problem addressed is the limited lexical proficiency among rural learners, often exacerbated by insufficient and decontextualized instructional resources.

Data were collected through a combination of instruments, including questionnaires, surveys, initial tests, classroom observations, and a semi-structured interview with an English teacher. The analysis revealed that vocabulary learning in rural contexts is shaped by three interrelated dimensions: lexical competence, teaching practices and learning strategies. The findings demonstrate that communicative, playful, and multimodal methodologies enhance students' motivation, retention, and ability to use vocabulary purposefully when they are adapted to the context.

This study concludes that developing lexical competence in rural bilingual contexts requires integrating cognitive, affective, and sociocultural dimensions into teaching practice. Contextualized materials grounded in students' realities not only foster vocabulary acquisition but also strengthen their cultural identity and communicative empowerment.

Consequently, this research contributes a strategic pedagogical proposal as a bridge between theory and practice, offering a framework for inclusive, transformative, and context-sensitive English language education in rural Colombia.

Keywords: lexical competence, bilingual education, rural contexts, contextualized materials, communicative approach.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación aborda el desarrollo de la competencia léxica a través del diseño e implementación de materiales didácticos contextualizados en un entorno de educación bilingüe rural en Colombia. Enmarcado en el paradigma interpretativo y sustentado en un enfoque cualitativo de estudio de caso, el estudio propone una estrategia pedagógica que responde a las realidades socioculturales y lingüísticas de los estudiantes de noveno grado de la Institución Educativa Plácido Retamoza. El problema central que se aborda es la limitada competencia léxica de los aprendices rurales, condicionada por la insuficiencia y descontextualización de los recursos pedagógicos disponibles.

La recolección de datos se realizó mediante la aplicación de cuestionarios, encuestas, pruebas diagnósticas, observaciones de aula y una entrevista semiestructurada a un docente de inglés. El análisis la información reveló que el aprendizaje del vocabulario en contextos rurales se configura a partir de tres dimensiones interrelacionadas: la competencia lexical, las prácticas de enseñanza y las prácticas de aprendizaje. Los hallazgos evidencian que las metodologías comunicativas, lúdicas y multimodales potencian la motivación estudiantil, la retención léxica y el uso funcional del vocabulario cuando se adaptan al contexto.

Este estudio concluye que el desarrollo de la competencia léxica en contextos bilingües rurales requiere integrar dimensiones cognitivas, afectivas y socioculturales en la práctica docente. Los materiales contextualizados, anclados en las realidades del estudiantado, no solo fortalecen la adquisición del vocabulario, sino que también promueven la identidad cultural y el empoderamiento comunicativo.

En consecuencia, esta investigación aporta una propuesta pedagógica estratégica como puente entre la teoría y práctica, ofreciendo un marco para una enseñanza del inglés inclusiva, transformadora y sensible al contexto en las zonas rurales de Colombia.

Palabras clave: competencia léxica, educación bilingüe, contextos rurales, materiales contextualizados, enfoque comunicativo.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
RESUMEN	5
INTRODUCTION	9
I. RESEARCH STATEMENT.....	12
1.1 research statement	12
1.2 Research Question.....	13
1.3 Research Objectives	13
II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	15
1. Backgrounds.....	15
2. Lexical Competence.....	19
3. Teaching Practice	21
4. Learning Practices	25
5. Approaches, Methodologies, Strategies And Resources For Lexical Competence	29
6. Methodological Foundations For The Pedagogical Proposal.	33
III. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN	35
Instruments To Collect Information And Data	37
Activity Schedule table	42
IV. DATA ANALYSIS.....	44
Lexical Competence.....	46
Teaching Practice	51
Learning Practices	56
V. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY	61
Pedagogical Foundations	62
WORDS THAT CONNECT US: A CONTEXTUAL STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN LEXICAL COMPETENCE IN RURAL ENGLISH CLASSROOMS	64
General Objective.....	64
Specific Objectives	64
Structure of the Strategy.....	64
Didactic Components	66
Teaching Materials	67
Multimodal Methodologies	68



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SEDE PRINCIPAL

8

Assessment	70
VI. CONCLUSIONS.....	72
VII. LIMITATIONS.....	76
VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS	78
APENDIX.....	80
REFERENCES	81

INTRODUCTION

Education in rural regions is marked by persistent challenges related to access, quality, equity, and relevance. In Colombia, these difficulties become even more pronounced: many rural schools operate with limited infrastructure, scarce teaching materials, and insufficient teacher training. Such conditions widen the learning gap between rural and urban students (DANE, 2021–2022) and reveal how far educational reality still is from national expectations. In this scenario, ensuring that educational proposals respond to the actual dynamics of rural life becomes essential. Education should not only guide learning but also become a pathway for participation, inclusion, and community growth. When these inequalities persist, they negatively affect students' academic performance and restrict the development of linguistic and communicative abilities that are crucial to engage in today's world.

Within this panorama, bilingual education emerges as a field with the potential to support inclusion and strengthen cultural diversity in rural settings (Caicedo, 2020; Cárdenas & Miranda, 2021). Although public discussion often reduces bilingual education to learning two languages, its scope is broader. García and Wei (2014) point out that bilingualism involves mobilizing languages as part of one's social, cognitive, and cultural experiences. From this angle, bilingual education in rural areas is tied to identity: understanding a new language allows learners to broaden their perspectives while maintaining and valuing their local traditions.

For rural Colombian students, bilingualism can open access to global knowledge without diminishing the significance of their community backgrounds. Yet this potential is only fully realized when pedagogical practices and materials incorporate the sociocultural worlds in which learners live (Quintero, 2022; Ortiz & López, 2022). This perspective invites teachers to use the rural context—not as an obstacle, but as a meaningful resource for teaching and learning.

One of the challenges that persists, however, is the slow progress many students show in vocabulary development. Lexical competence—understood as the ability to recognize, retain, and use words effectively in communication (Cassany, Luna & Sanz, 1998; Nation, 2013; Schmitt, 2000)—is essential for meaningful interaction in a second language. Wilkins (1976) captured this idea clearly when he observed that “without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed,” underscoring how central word knowledge is to language learning. Nevertheless, vocabulary instruction in many rural classrooms still relies heavily on memorization, isolated word lists, and decontextualized repetition (Thornbury, 2002; Vega, 2020). These practices limit students’ ability to connect English to their own experiences and needs, reinforcing the urgency of adopting strategies that make vocabulary learning more relevant and purposeful.

Grounded in Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, this study views learning as a process mediated by social interaction. Research conducted in rural Colombian contexts (Arcila, 2018; Parra, 2021) indicates that linking vocabulary instruction to students’ cultural practices and everyday environments increases their motivation and improves their performance. These findings highlight the importance of designing teaching proposals that consider students’ sociocultural realities as key elements in the development of lexical competence.

With these considerations in mind, this master's thesis proposes to enhance ninth-grade students' vocabulary through the creation of teaching materials that draw on the rural bilingual context in which they live. The study was carried out at Plácido Retamoza School, located in San Jacinto del Cauca, Bolívar—an institution that mirrors the challenges and possibilities of rural bilingual education in the country. Using a qualitative action research approach (Creswell, 2014; Brinkmann, 2015), the project emphasized reflection, inquiry, and pedagogical innovation. Although the proposal remained at a conceptual and design stage and was not implemented, it lays the groundwork for future work that could significantly support vocabulary development in rural bilingual education.

I. RESEARCH STATEMENT

1.1 research statement

Learning a foreign language also hinges on the necessity for the evolution of communicative competence, which necessitates lexical competence for the capacity for linguistic interpretation, communicative expression, and meaning negotiation in various contexts.

Vocabulary learning in rural Colombian schools is in the face of several challenges such as the lack of adequate pedagogic resources, poor exposure to EFL outside the classroom and teaching practice which is not necessarily adapted to the socio-linguistic reality of the pupils.

These are the conditions resulting in learning gaps that prevent students from using English actively in communicative contexts. Therefore, advancing lexical competence is a prerequisite to the enhancement of language acquisition and also to make language learning experiences more equitable. In this regard, the Plácido Retamoza Educational Institution is confronted with the challenge of accommodating students in ninth grades, since their vocabulary is not sufficiently developed for the level required.

The design and delivery of learning materials that are tailor-made to these students' requirements is one approach that may counteract these limitations of the current instructional process and allow for more engaged and meaningful vocabulary learning. This research project aims to contribute toward that end by contributing with a pedagogic design in response to the specific nature of rural education and the linguistic contexts of participants.

Within this context, the Plácido Retamoza Educational Institution faces the challenge of supporting ninth-grade learners whose vocabulary repertoire remains insufficient for grade-level expectations. The creation and implementation of teaching materials specifically designed for their needs emerges as a strategy that can bridge current limitations and foster more active and meaningful vocabulary learning. This research project seeks to contribute to that purpose by proposing a pedagogical strategy that responds to the particular characteristics of rural education and the linguistic realities of the students.

1.2 Research Question

How might the creation of teaching materials contribute to improving the vocabulary of ninth-grade students in a rural area of Colombia?

1.3 Research Objectives

General Objective

Aligned with this purpose, the project specifically aims to create a strategy for the development of lexical competence in ninth grade at the Plácido Retamoza Educational Institution. The proposed strategy seeks to provide pedagogical tools that foster vocabulary growth while considering the socio-linguistic environment of the students, generating learning experiences that are both meaningful and functional.

Specific Objectives

Diagnose the current teaching-learning practices and challenges related to lexical competence in rural schools in order to identify gaps and contextual factors that influence students' vocabulary acquisition.

Consolidate a theoretical foundation supported by the literature review and the background of the study categories to ensure that the research is grounded in well-established pedagogical concepts and approaches.

Design a pedagogical strategy aimed at strengthening lexical competence through innovative and contextually relevant methodologies that promote students' vocabulary development.

Through the thoughtful integration of materials and methodologies suited to the reality of the learners, this research aspires to contribute to a more inclusive, meaningful, and effective approach to second language education in rural areas of Colombia.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter there is a list of the theoretical and conceptual foundations that have been very important to develop this research. In this, was necessary to review the background that supports the main subject of the project; that is why, a local, national and international researches were necessary to provide a contextual understanding of the topic. In the same way, there are some relevant concepts as the lexical competence, teaching practice and learning practice that have been the path of this research, such as the lexical competence, teaching practice and learning practice.

1. Backgrounds

In this section there are some researches that have been worked in a local, national and international way. These studies are focused on the teaching of the lexical competence in rural public schools; also, they describe some of the limitations that rural public schools face in the process of learning. Besides, these studies bring some strategies that can be used by taking into account the context of the population.

1.1 Local Studies

Research carried out in rural Colombian contexts reveals that the implementation of bilingual education continues to face challenges, particularly in the areas of vocabulary and resource contextualization. Students are limited in the development of their lexicon and communicative potential due to the lack of pedagogical resources and contextualized strategies.

Similarly, Parra (2021) studied some bilingual programs from the rural area of the department of Meta, confirming that the teaching materials used by most replicates urban or international models; none question the local reality, nor the socio-cultural background of the students. Quintero (2022) mentioned that students' daily life and rural context are able to develop cultural input necessary to form lexical competence. Similarly, Ortiz and López (2022) proposed the design and implementation of contextualized didactic sequences to promote the acquisition of vocabulary and communicative performance, which motivates students and facilitates their participation in rural bilingual classrooms. Considering the Colombian rural reality, I believe it is essential to develop curriculum materials that promote word and communicative competence.

1.2 National Studies

At the level of Latin America, various studies deepened the understanding of lexical competence and its relationship with academic performance and communicative competence. According to Robles García (2019), lexical competence is the most essential component of linguistic development, allowing students to make sense in foreign language classrooms. Riffo Ocares et al. (2018) found a link between lexical competence, reading comprehension, and academic competence of Chile's high school students.

Thus, they evidence the importance of teaching vocabulary explicitly. Alejos (2017) argued the importance of lexical competence for students' success with the academic reading and writing processes, applying it to the higher education context.

Many Ibero-American authors have been providing theoretical and methodological referents for didactic innovation from pedagogic stand. Dolz and Schneuwly (2004) conceptualized the didactic sequence as a dialectic machine for teaching and learning a language in a more rigorous way. Using the framework discussed above, Soler Pardo et al. (2013) designed and applied didactic sequences in foreign language teaching to a good effect and produced meaningful learning.

Teaching strategies that promote autonomous learning are essential (Díaz Barriga and Hernández Rojas, 2010). Salinas (2004) indicates that through the use of digital materials, innovation and flexibility will be present throughout the educational process. Together, these contributions will provide a comprehensive theoretical basis for designing contextualized materials that enhance lexical competence through meaningful learning that engages students.

1.3 International Studies

Studies have been done relating to pedagogical leadership, strategic planning and contextualized methodologies to language education and innovation at international level. Davies and Davies (2006) developed a model for strategic leadership in schools. A reflective teacher is essential in developing appropriate pedagogical and curricular designs. In the same manner, Eacott and Cheng studied educational leadership in Australia and China, respectively.

Their studies highlighted the emergence of contextualized strategies for more effective teaching and institutional advancement. Carvalho et al. (2021) state that in a systematic review, evidence-based strategic leadership is positioned as a driver of educational quality and innovation.

According to different world studies in applied linguistics, contextual learning has certainly relevance within lexicon and discourse development. Dolz and Schneuwly (2004) approach aimed at stakeholders of a communicative nature that incorporates authentic materials in meaningful contexts. Studies conducted with the spirit of communicative language teaching (CLT) have proved that it is easier to learn vocabulary in context and culturally relevant setting (Nation, 2013; Richards, 2017). Similarly, worldwide perspectives on bilingual education emphasize the need to use learners' cultural identities and real-life experiences as resources for language learning (Cummins, 2008; García & Wei, 2014). The studies suggest that contextualization is paramount for ensuring an equitable and effective bilingual education, particularly in rural or underserved settings.

Based on the literature we concluded that lexical competence is an essential part of communication competence and academic achievement as highlighted in international and regional studies on lexical learning and didactic design, it becomes clear that research on the effect and use of contextualized didactic materials for the strengthening of lexical competence in rural bilingual classrooms needs to be done in Colombia. Most previous works are mostly on urban contexts or general vocabulary instruction without focusing on the sociocultural realities and pedagogical constraints of rural education.

The current study intends to fill this gap by creating, implementing, and evaluating contextualized didactic materials for developing the lexical competence of the ninth-year bilingual rural student. Also, the study seeks to contribute to local educational improvement and the field of bilingual education.

2. Lexical Competence

2.1 Concept

The Colombian MEN (2009) refers to competence as “the knowledge, skills and abilities a person develops to understand, transform, and act in the world in which he lives” (p. 1). In other words, in this regard, a key component of communicative competence is lexical competence, the ability to understand and use vocabulary.

Lexical competence refers to the speaker’s ability to use words properly, not only knowing what a word means but also its connotation or meaning and its lexical and grammatical behavior (Cassany et al. 1998). According to Nation (2013), lexical knowledge consists of three types: Form, Meaning and Use, which are interconnected. To really know a word, you should know how it is said, written, spelt, its meaning and grammar, and frequency. Schmitt (2000). Therefore, the lexical competence goes beyond word recognition, it represents a dynamic process of knowing and using vocabulary properly.

Being good with words is not just about memorizing vocabulary. It also includes the ability to use vocabulary strategically and appropriately in authentic communication. According to Lewis’ Lexical Approach (1993), language is mainly made up of prefabricated chunks rather than isolated words. Lewis thus advocates teaching that provides exposure to meaningful and natural expressions.

2.2 Relevance

Lexical competence implies knowledge and acquaintance with the vocabulary of language. According to Wilkins (1976, p. 111), “without grammar very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed”, showing how much communication depends on lexis. According to Nation (2013) and Laufer (1997), knowing vocabulary is more important than knowing grammar in helping learners to understand, create and interpret messages. These points of view reinforce that the lexical competence is essential for expressing and understanding real communication.

In Colombia, Gómez and Castañeda (2020) claim that vocabulary development enhances learner confidence and communicative participation, especially in settings with limited access to the English language. As a result, developing language skills can improve communicative effectiveness, foster learner autonomy, and boost motivation.

These aspects are very crucial in rural education, where there are fewer opportunities for exposure to real English. In this context, students depend on the limited exposure they receive at school as they have limited access to technological resources or pedagogical materials which restrict the chances to use and practice the language.

2.3 Meaningful Contexts for Vocabulary Learning

When new words are connected to meaningful situations, they remain attentive longer and have more impact. According to Vygotsky’s (1978) sociocultural theory, interaction and contextual mediation matter for learning. From this standpoint, a learner vocabulary develops best when employing English to talk about something known or something in his reality.

Research done in Colombia (e.g., Ortiz & López, 2022; Cárdenas & Miranda, 2021) shows that contextualized instruction allows students to relate English vocabulary with their surroundings which reinforces motivation and comprehension in the learning process. By connecting new vocabulary to familiar situations learners find the content more meaningful and easier to retain encouraging active participation.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of Samsudin et al (2024), which showed that the use of local materials helps students in retention of vocabulary, culture literacy and motivation. Hence, meaningful contexts can enhance both language learning and the development of cultural identity along with emotional involvement. This is important in the rural context, where connecting learning to student's experiences improve both their vocabulary development and their sense of cultural belonging.

3. Teaching Practice

A teacher's teaching practice refers to the methodology, strategy and didactic employed by the teacher to develop learners' lexical competence. It includes the choice of strategies, types of activities, and assessment methods which make possible for vocabulary learning through use and not memorization. According to Nation, 2013, effective vocabulary instruction needs sufficient exposure, deliberate attention and communicative use. This position is in the spirit of Schmitt's (2000) and Lewis's (1993) Lexical Approach, which holds that language is mainly the learning and contextualized use of lexical items, rather than the learning of grammar *per se*.

In Colombia, studies (Cárdenas et al. 2020; Rojas-Barreto 2022) have shown that contextual limitations such as few digital tools and little teacher training influence teaching practices used in EFL (English as a foreign language) classrooms in rural contexts. Yet, rural teachers often try creative and resourceful methods to teach English in meaningful and cultural relevant ways.

3.1 Strategies for Lexical Competence

Teachers support lexical development by integrating visual aids, experimental tasks, and contextualized texts to situate new vocabulary within meaningful communicative use, this is consistent with Nation's (2013) making emphasis on the rich and meaningful input provided for effective vocabulary learning.

According to Wright et al. (2006), games encourage interaction and enjoyment, thus allowing vocabulary to be picked up naturally through communication. As part of this study, Suárez & López (2019) found that using playful and cooperative strategies in rural schools in Córdoba, Colombia, enhanced learning vocabulary retention and motivation.

Bonwell and Eison (1991) also argue that multimodal methodologies motivate students to take the initiative in building their own knowledge. These methods including task-based learning, project work, and problem solving are all critical for developing lexical competence in communicative contexts (Ellis, 2017). Gutiérrez & Díaz (2021) reported that teachers used participatory methodologies in rural Colombian classrooms so that vocabulary acquisition increased and students had confidence to use English meaningfully. In this sense, the author denotes that students become more motivated when they are actively involved in the class and this foster confidence in using English.

3.2 Typology of Activities

Activities to support vocabulary learning may focus on comprehension, memorization, usage or communicative practice. Richards and Rodgers (2014) note that using different types of tasks ensures a balance of receptive and productive skills. Mayer (2001) points out that when learners connect verbal and visual information, visual perception facilitate retention. This view reveals the potential of using flashcards, pictures, and videos.

Colombian research echoes this view. Jiménez and Martínez (2020) found that active tasks based on local contexts, such as the description of life in the countryside or agrarian practices, improve vocabulary retention and contextual understanding in the students of Bolívar. It is the same for Castro & Muñoz (2022) who believe that the use of songs, dialogues, or community-based projects will help the students internalize vocabulary and relate it to their daily context. This highlight the value of using meaningful, locally rooted activities to enhance students' vocabulary development in rural context.

3.3 Vocabulary Practice

Students should practice nearly all vocabulary both orally and in writing through meaningful repetition in context and in communicative activities. According to Nation (2013), it is a matter of vocabulary learning a learner encountering and using the words repeatedly in a real context. According to Schmitt (2010), when students learn a vocabulary word, they should engage in retrieval and generation tasks so that the word sticks.

Patiño & Rodríguez (2023) describe how writing, acting, and cooperating activities shifted the students' mobilization of the English vocabulary, in rural Colombian classrooms, from recognition to production. This fits the communicative approach, which places language learning in real social interaction (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

3.4 Assessment

Vocabulary instruction assessment must include not only testing of recall but also meaningful use. Formative assessment means any type of assessment that gives information about your student's progress through observation, project work, and oral performance. It can be used to enhance learning objectivity and teacher feedback (Brown, 2015). While assessing the lexical competence of learners, it is essential to take account of different receptive and productive dimensions; be mindful of the conditions of social and culture use (Cassany et al. 1998). In other words, assessment becomes a fundamental part in the learning process to evaluate not just what students remember, but how effectively students apply vocabulary in authentic context.

Recent research in Colombia reinforces this approach. Arévalo & Peña (2021) found that continuous and process-oriented evaluation in rural schools led learners to reflect on their vocabulary while reducing test-related anxiety. Torres & Vega (2020) also found that self-assessment and peer feedback foster autonomy and commitment to vocabulary learning, especially when activities were semi-communicative.

In other words, teaching practice for lexical competence should combine various strategies, activities and assessment instruments adapted to the realities on the ground. As for rural areas, this means using what is available, relating learning to students, and getting students actively involved. This approach is in line with both communicative and lexical frameworks that organize this research and serves as a basis for the design of relevant didactic materials which reinforce vocabulary learning.

4. Learning Practices

Learning practices encompass the strategies, attitudes, and cognitive–affective processes that learners adopt for the acquisition, retention, and use of lexical knowledge of a foreign language. The practices under consideration in EFL learning encompass how learners work with vocabulary, which types of activity they respond to best, and the emotional and contextual factors that shape their learning behavior (Oxford, 2017; Nation, 2013). The subcategories analyzed here—learning styles, receptiveness, complexity, and his socioemotional aspect—show the complexity of lexical learning in the classroom.

4.1 Learning Styles

Learning styles refer to the students' preferred ways of processing internally new information as said by Reid (1995) "Learning styles are the internally based characteristics of individuals for the intake or understanding of new information" while Oxford (2017) views this concept as "Style is not a rigid, permanent trait of an individual but rather a dynamic, changeable set of tendencies that can shift according to context and development." These perspectives show that while students may have particular learning preferences, these can be flexible and can evolve, hence instructions should be varied, adapted and a response to student's needs.

In Colombia, EFL studies (Cárdenas & Miranda, 2019; Valverde & Caicedo, 2020) reveal that it is important to consider learning styles to create inclusive classes with engaging activities in rural contexts where there are limited resources. Making lessons suitable for different learning styles helps learners remember the words better and makes them more independent.

According to Nation (2013), learning vocabulary is not just a one-time deal. If we want to fully learn any vocabulary, we have to encounter it more than once through different styles. Learner's need repeated exposure to vocabulary to improve long term memorization of the vocabulary.

4.2 Receptiveness.

Receptiveness is when a learner positively engages with teacher's methods and materials. It is closely related to motivation and enjoyment that facilitates the internalization of lexicon items (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). When language games, songs, stories, etc. are used actively, they create a situation in which the learners are fully engaged, which helps memory registration.

(Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2006). Promoting receptiveness through multimodal methodologies, expose students to a deeper vocabulary acquisition process.

Colombian research by Ramos-Holguín and Gómez-Parra (2021) and Díaz-Márquez (2022) supports that students show more receptivity when the activities are meaningful and in accordance with their experiences. As previously stated, when activities are carefully designed and grounded in students' real context, learning becomes more effective and meaningful.

For rural learners, incorporating local culture and traditions into lessons makes learners more engaged and improves their vocabulary learning. So being receptive is not only cognitive but also cultural in that relevant and enjoyable learning experiences contribute to increased vocabulary growth.

4.3 Complexity

The complexity of learning a new word would refer to the difficulty students feel when learning the word. For instance, the students may experience difficulty learning a new word if it is abstract, polysemous, or has no first language equivalent (Schmitt, 2010; Nation, 2013). Learners' motivation and confidence in terms of vocabulary use and communicative tasks are influenced by cognitive complexity.

Research conducted in rural Colombian institutions of learning indicates that learners find it difficult to pronounce, form and use words correctly (García & Peñaloza, 2020; Londoño & Torres, 2022). Often, such problems arise due to a lack of authentic input in English and little oral practice.

According to Nation (2013) and Lewis (1993), repeated exposure to high-frequency words, accompanied by scaffolder practice and varied context usage, is required to move from comprehension to production capacity.

In connection with the previous information, this research shows that complexity poses challenges for rural students while developing the lexical competence. These difficulties arise due to the lack of exposure to communicative situations causing hesitation or low confidence when oral intervention.

4.4 Socioemotional Dimension.

The socioemotional dimension highlights the role of emotional and social factors in vocabulary learning, such as confidence and motivation, as well as teacher support and classroom climate. Anxiety, low motivation, and lack of confidence limit input processing and acquisition, according to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982). On the other hand, a positive emotional environment increases language risk-taking and persistence.

Socioemotional factors are especially relevant to Colombian rural EFL classrooms. According to studies by Cruz-Arcila (2018) and Castañeda and Álvarez (2021), teacher motivation, empathy and collaborative work, positively influence motivation and willingness to communicate. When students feel comfortable and like they belong, they are less afraid to make mistakes and will start using new vocabulary spontaneously. So, it is essential to address socioemotional needs for effective lexical development.

5. Approaches, Methodologies, Strategies And Resources For Lexical Competence

Developing lexical competence requires deliberate pedagogical methods that promote both the achievement and effective use of vocabulary. Lexical competence consists of knowledge of form, meaning and use of the word. This really requires moving beyond just learning by heart to learning in context and in a meaningful.

Nation, P. (2013). *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. According to Schmitt (2010), the teaching of vocabulary should combine its receptive and productive dimensions. In other words, learners should be able to use the words to communicate.

5.1 Communicative and Lexical Approaches

According to Lewis (1993), the lexical approach proposed by Lewis (1993) argues that vocabulary is at the centre of language learning. He states that fluency depends more on the knowledge of blocks of words and collocations than on grammar.

According to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Richards & Rodgers, 2014), vocabulary instruction takes place through authentic communication tasks that trigger the learners' use of language. The two approaches believe that the development of the lexicon should take place through meaningful interaction rather than through empty drills.

Recent research in Colombia (Vélez-Rendón, 2021; García & Rojas, 2023) has demonstrated that implementing communicative and lexical-based methodologies improves students' vocabulary acquisition effectively, notably when grounding activities in the learners' contexts.

These methods can make the learners internalize the language patterns through repeated exposure. It is done through functional tasks like dialogues, role plays, and project based learning.

5.2 Contextualized and Cultural-Based Learning

Learning vocabulary in context means linking new vocabulary to what children already know. According to the work of Cassany et al. (1998), learning will be meaningful provided you can relate the word to something you already know. When vocabulary instruction integrates the context of the Colombian rural one (agriculture, traditions, events), more appropriate and interesting it becomes (Cruz-Arcila, 2018; Acosta & Ramos-Holguín, 2020). As per the authors emphasize, the idea that context plays an important role in learning lexis in the language acquisition process helps students become familiar with the vocabulary to be worked on.

Learning materials that are based in local wisdom not only help learners with language but also strengthen cultural identity and motivation. The study conducted by Samsudin, Sukarismanti, and Rasmin in 2024 found that teaching materials based on the local context optimize students' vocabulary retention, reading comprehension skills, as well as their motivation.

Not only this, but they also enhance the students' cultural literacy, ownership of knowledge, and the relevance of teaching materials. Another research in Colombian EFL classrooms by Díaz-Márquez (2022) shows that the use of community-based materials allows students to identify English as a means for expressing their realities rather than an abstract academic subject.

5.3 Playful and Multimodal Methodologies

Use language games, dramatizations, and other playful learning strategies have all been recognized as effective in vocabulary instruction. According to Wright et al. (2006), using games in the classroom allows students to naturally produce language while working as a group as well as lowering the affective filter. This means that they will play without fear or anxiety and enjoy using the words they are learning. Bonwell and Eison (1991) emphasize that actively learning techniques involves students mentally and emotionally which helps them remember the content better.

The studies by Gómez & García (2021) and Medina & Castro (2020) from Colombia evidence the success of playful strategies and task-based learning in rural EFL classrooms, showing increased vocabulary acquisition and communicative self-efficacy. These strategies help counteract the shortage of technology, as they circle around interaction, creativity, and student cooperation rather than technological artifacts. Play-based learning can improve language skills in areas with limited resources in a suitable manner.

5.4 Integrative Strategy Framework.

You can develop effective lexical competence through four types of approaches. These include communicative, contextual, playful, and multimodal ones. Nation (2013) and Lewis (1993) suggests vocabulary should be offered, done, and recycled through meaningful use. The Colombian researchers Cruz-Arcila (2018) and García and Peñaloza (2020) point out that taking local realities as reference points in addition to using multimodal methodologies and accessible materials results in better engagement and outcomes in rural EFL contexts.

The improvement of lexical competence in schools in Colombia requires pedagogical designs that guarantee a link between the learning of a language and cultural identity, emotion and social participation. This integrative framework elevates students' vocabulary proficiency while communal ensures their empowering of them to empower their belongingness within their community givens.

Vocabulary is the foundation of language proficiency. Referring to Wilkins (1976), nothing can happen without vocabulary. However, in many rural Colombian schools, vocabulary teaching remains limited to memorization activities that do not take meaning and communication into account.

An analysis of classroom practices and initial tests shows the learners can recognize basic words, they cannot use them in speech or writing. In addition, limited access to technology and authentic resources prevents meaningful exposure to English.

5.4 Visual and Active Resources

Using pictures and playing vocabulary games with flashcards and posters help in vocabulary instruction. According to Mayer's (2001) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, learners are better able to retain information when they receive the same information in both verbal and visual form. Visuals can help EFL learners remember and understand the meaning of words that the teacher uses.

According to studies from Colombia (Suárez & Jiménez, 2019; Herrera & Quintero, 2022), using different types of resources helps better understand the meanings of a word, more so for visual learners and students with little exposure to the English language. They make abstract words concrete and relatable, bridging the gaps between the linguistic repertoire of rural classrooms and English input. Using visuals and other media helps all students participate and remember vocabulary for a long time.

6. Methodological Foundations For The Pedagogical Proposal.

The Words That Connect Us proposal has four theoretical assumptions that allow pedagogical coherence and methodological integration of this educational proposal. The Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993) is based on the synthesis of the concept that language learning hinges not on grammar but rather on the use of lexical chunks, that is, collocations, phrases and patterns of meaning. The viewpoint centers vocabulary as important for developing communicative competence. So this supports activities that present students with interesting and meaningful content. And secondly it encourages the productive use of words in contexts.

The strategy Words That Connect Us proposes the constant use of lexis through communicative tasks of dramatizations, projects, descriptive writing, favorable to the internalization of language but not by mechanics but rather by uses.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Vygotsky (1978) Sociocultural Theory provide parametric methodology that places learning as a socially mediated process.

Looking at things this way, interaction, cooperation and dialogue are not only teaching-learning strategies but also conditions for cognitive, social and linguistic development. The strategy Words That Connect Us is based on these key principles: Peer collaboration and scaffolding; contextualized communication within a supportive classroom. The words and actions of teachers and their students stand out most. The use of Contextualized Pedagogy is an approach which takes into consideration local realities, traditions and the sociocultural setting of the students. The strategy that we practice under Words That Connect Us ensures that learning the language is contextualized and enriching. It draws connections between English vocabulary and students' experiences within their communities. It is a way of aligning global language goals with local identity.

III. METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Framed within the interpretative paradigm, this study assumes that knowledge is socially constructed and it cannot be separated from the historical, political and cultural conditions through which it is produced. The interpretative paradigm guided us to understand the educational reality through dialogue and interaction with the participants. According to the framework of the educational research “the interpretative paradigm seeks to understand and interpret educational phenomena from perspective of the actors themselves, considering that reality is social, subjective, and dynamic construction shaped through interaction and the meaning people give to their experiences.” (05. Paradigms, Approaches and Methods of Educational Research, p. 23). From this point of view, the critical paradigm illustrates that education always goes connected with the students’ real lives and the experiences from their context.

The present study was prompted by the understanding that the rural context requires transformative approaches to respond to the learner’s realities. Strengthening student’s lexical repertoire becomes essential in this process, as vocabulary forms the foundation of communication, thus this research seeks to contribute to education in a rural context.

The methodological approach is qualitative, as it seeks to interpret the experiences, practices, and contextual needs of a rural community of education. Instead of statistical generalizations, the deeper understanding of participants’ realities, meaning-making and context take precedence over quantification.

The research utilizes a case study method to gain a deep understanding of a specific educational situation comprehending the context and the voices of the participants involved which allows for ongoing reflection and improvement of the proposed strategy.

The assessment of practices related to teaching and learning with respect to lexical competence with teacher and student involvement, will not only involve designing pedagogical tools with clear didactic purposes but also generating critical and transforming-inclusive education based on the community's sociocultural development.

The study population is ninth grade students and one English teacher who are the participants involved in this educational experience, the participants provided permission as stated in the consent forms (Appendix 2). Regarding the student's population, the study population consists of twenty-five ninth-grade students from the public I.E. Plácido Retamoza, located in the rural municipality of San Jacinto del Cauca, Bolívar. These learners, ranging in age from thirteen to seventeen years, enrolled at the middle-school level. These students provide the key data needed to understand current learning practices and the factors that influence learning of the lexical competence in this community.

Giving more details in regards of our participants, the universe comprises all ninth-grade students enrolled in the institution. The population corresponds to the twenty-five ninth-grade learners who participate directly in this experience. The sample includes the same students who were selected to take part in the study and whose lexical competence constitutes the central focus of the research.

As per the teacher population, the universe consists on the three English teachers at the institution in both primary and secondary levels. The population is made up of the two teachers who are specifically responsible for teaching English in the secondary. The sample is the one English teacher who was observed and interviewed and who had also taught the participating students in eighth grade. This teacher contributes important insights for understanding the teaching practices related to the lexical competence.

The teacher participant is a thirty-eight years old, licensed professional with a degree in English language education. He teaches at the I.E. Plácido Retamoza – main campus, where he is currently responsible for grades sixth, seventh, and eighth in the secondary level. With ten years of experience teaching English, he brings extensive classroom practice and a deep understanding of students' linguistic needs. His ongoing work with the same learners across different grades provides valuable continuity and insight for this study to understand the teaching practices on lexical competence.

Instruments To Collect Information And Data

For this study, we designed and applied several research instruments aimed at the participants to be able to collect comprehensive and credible data. We chose these tools because they would give us the information we need to find out about the teaching and learning practices influencing vocabulary development.

A set of instruments used by the researcher was a questionnaire, a survey, and an initial test administered to ninth-grade students. Classroom observation and interview with the English teacher. With these tools, we were able to find out what students were learning, vocabulary knowledge, and the kind of teaching used in the learning situation.

Questionnaire for Students

In words of Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018) a questionnaire is defined as “a structured instrument for data collection which enables the researcher to gather information about the attitudes, opinions, behaviour and characteristics of a defined population” (p. 317). This research involved Student Questionnaire to acquire detailed information such as bilingual learning practices, frequency of use and challenges faced in the classroom to know their lifestyle.

The questionnaire helps to identify the factors that affect the student learning practices and vocabulary competency development through a thorough examination of the students’ habits, preferences, and perceived difficulties concerning these development practices (Appendix 1).

Student Survey: Learning English Vocabulary

Is essential to consider the contribution of Creswell's (2014) who asserts that “A survey may be a systematic method of collecting data from a sample for the purpose of describing the attitude, opinion, behavior, or characteristic of a population.” (p. 155). The student survey was designed as a semi-structured questionnaire that combined a closed-ended multiple-choice set and open-ended questions. It was prepared to look into the ways learners acquire and remember vocabulary items in English.

According to Creswell (2014), a survey is a systematic method for collecting data from a sample to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of a population (p. 155). In this way, the survey became a key instrument to discover how students engage with vocabulary and to identify the factors that shape their learning experience.

This student survey is designed as a semi-structured questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice and open-ended questions to examine in what ways learners acquire and remember English vocabulary. It gathers information on the strategies students use, the materials they prefer, and their personal perceptions of vocabulary learning. By capturing these perspectives, the survey provides valuable insights into the resources and practices that most effectively support their development of lexical competence in a rural school context (Appendix 1).

Initial Test: Lexical Proficiency

The concept of this instrument can be better understood through the perspective of Brown (2010) who mentions that an initial test is “an assessment tool used to identify learners’ strengths and weaknesses in specific language areas before instruction begins.” (p. 64) This initial test was created to evaluate ninth-grade students’ vocabulary mastery and their ability to use lexical items in context across English topics studied from elementary school through the current grade.

The topics covered in the initial test were considered from the English curriculum, they are classified as the following: People and personal identity, body and health, everyday context and places, time and calendar, culture and society, parts of speech and functional language.

The instrument is structured in four sections: Matching, Multiple Choice, Fill in the Blanks, and Short Writing; these sections allow the comprehensive assessment of student's lexical competence level. Matching and multiple choice section measures the recognition and basic understanding, which are essential to identify student's receptive vocabulary. Fill in the blanks, require learners to retrieve and use vocabulary in context evaluating a deeper level of comprehension and productive use of English. The short writing task was included to assess student's ability to apply vocabulary to produce their own ideas.

This structure aligns with the regular type of tasks or test regularly used at the institution, ensuring the familiarity to the evaluation practices. Together, they can provide a rounded view of student's lexical competence and their ability to transfer vocabulary knowledge into common communicative situations (Appendix 1)

Classroom Observation / Field Diary

The classroom observation instrument was designed as a structured field diary — understood as a systematic record of classroom events, interactions and researcher reflections used to capture practice in naturalistic settings (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995). This format supports consistent data collection on teaching strategies, student engagement, and classroom dynamics.

The observation is structured with the following aspects: the general data section logs contextual data (name of teacher, grade, subject, date, time, observer and classroom location), class opening, lesson development, teacher and student interaction, use of pedagogical resources, classroom management and lesson closing. There are guiding questions and room for description for each aspect (Appendix1).

Interview

To frame the use of interview within this research, it is important to consider how Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) defines that an interview is “a professional conversation which is structured and has a purpose – to obtain descriptions of the lived world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 3). This perspective provides the foundation for understanding the interview as purposeful tool to generate insights within this study.

The purpose of this semi-structured interview was to obtain in-depth information regarding the English teacher’s practices and perspectives on lexical competence in language teaching. The instrument commences with a General Data section, which reports the teacher’s name, institution, teaching levels, and profession. After this, a collection of open-ended questions posed, grouped into categories: Lexical Competence, Teaching Practice, Learning Practices, and Recommendations.

The design enables the interview to obtain not only the teacher’s conception of how the lexical competence is developed but also their classroom experiences, specific strategies, and resources, as well as ways students’ vocabulary development has been shaped (Appendix 1).

Activity Schedule table

The following chart indicates the timeframe, ranging from the identification of research problem to the preparation of final report, for each stage of the MABA project.

The conceptual framework is the backbone of any research study or dissertation. Shaded months indicate throughout period for specifying the component. Collection and analysis of data for subsequent reporting and interpretation of results indicated in the shaded months.



Tabla 1 Stages of the project	Activities	2024	2025						
		Ago-Sept.	Oct. Nov.	Dic. Ene.	Feb.Mar.	AbrilMayo	Juni-Jul	AgoSept	Oct. Nov
Stage 1 Identification of the problem or generation of research interest.	Correlation of an educational field with one of the three thematic axes of the MABA.	X	X						
Stage 2 Selection of references and base concepts.	Theoretical framework		X						
Stage 3 Methodological design	Instrument design.			X	X				
	Validation of instruments.					X			
	Management of informed consent					X			
Stage 4 Interpretation of the information and analysis of results.	Application of instruments						X		
	Data analysis and reporting						X		
	Student Survey: Learning English Vocabulary						X		
	Diagnostic Test: Lexical Proficiency – 9th Grade						X		
	Classroom Observation / Field Diary							X	
	Interview with the English Teacher							X	

Note: Adapted from the example of a paper shared by Professor Sandra Rodriguez, personal communication, 2025.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis and interpretation of the results obtained from the data collected through interviews, observation, initial test, survey, and questionnaires applied to the English teacher and ninth-grade students at the Institución Educativa Plácido Retamoza will be presented in this next section.

The analysis was organized into three categories and its corresponding subcategories: Lexical Competence, Teaching Practice and Learning Practices.

Each category examines certain aspect of participants' perceptions, experiences and strategies, which deal with the development of lexical competence as well as didactic material in rural education contexts. This allows for a complete understanding of the way theories and pedagogies and learning behaviors are inter-related and influence the teaching and learning of lexis in the English as a foreign language classroom.



Tabla 2
Categories

Category	Subcategory	Descriptor
Lexical competence	Conception	The teacher's understanding of what lexical competence is and how the mastery of English vocabulary is developed.
	Relevance	The importance given to vocabulary as the foundation for effective communication in English learning.
	Meaningful contexts	Real or relatable situations that the teacher promotes to help students use and retain vocabulary.
Teaching practice	Strategies for lexical competence	The methods and resources that the teacher uses to teach and strengthen English vocabulary learning.
	Typology of activities	A set of tasks designed to facilitate the understanding, memorization, application, and practice of lexis in various contexts, aimed at strengthening comprehension, retention, and appropriate vocabulary use.
	Vocabulary practice	Exercises and activities that allow students to use vocabulary both orally and in writing, in order to reinforce and consolidate their mastery.
	Evaluation	The processes and tools used to measure students' progress and appropriation of vocabulary and its use in communicative situations.
Learning practices	Learning styles	The different ways in which students process, assimilate, and retain English vocabulary according to their preferences and learning approaches.
	Receptivity	Playful activities that reflect greater student engagement and openness toward vocabulary learning.
	Complexity	Refers to the content areas where students experience greater difficulty in understanding.
	Socio-emotional	A set of emotional and social factors—such as confidence, motivation, and teacher support—that influence students' participation and willingness to communicate in English.

Source: Author's own elaboration (2025).

The table above outlines the analytical structure that guided the interpretation of the data, detailing the categories and subcategories involved and their descriptors that frame the core dimensions of lexical competence, teaching practice and the learning practices. This structure provided a system to identify patterns and understand how lexis is taught and learned in the educational context. Based on this structure, the following section presents the findings organized by categories and their subcategories.

Lexical Competence

This category encompasses the perceptions and conceptions of the interviewed teacher regarding the meaning of lexical competence and its role in English learning. It includes the following subcategories: Conception, Relevance, and Meaningful Contexts, whose results are evidenced in the applied instruments.

Conception

The term ‘lexical competence’ indicates the definition of vocabulary teaching in English as a foreign language. According to the teacher’s views, the students need to learn and acquire words to communicate, practice, reflect and use them in real life productively. The instructor articulates:

“For me, lexical competence is the ability students develop to understand and use vocabulary in different real communication situations, whether speaking or writing. It’s not just about memorizing word lists but really knowing when and how to use them, what they mean in different contexts, and how they relate to other words.”

Similarly, vocabulary knowledge is also learning the relationship between different words. This view aligns with what Schmitt (2000) and Nation (2013) explain, that the mastering of lexis means knowing the meaning, use, and context of lexis. Therefore, this enables learners to formulate clear and appropriate messages.

The teacher's definition as expressed in the interview is in major respect in agreement with the theoretical framework's definition of lexical competence. Both definitions appear to indicate that vocabulary learning is not just learning words but using them in real oral and written communication. However, Cassany et al., nation, Schmitt and others take a theoretical definition of the concept in a broader, more analysed way, by including the linguistic, grammatical, semantic, cultural factor and so on. On the other hand, the view of the teacher is pragmatic in the sense that it prioritizes vocabulary to use the actual interaction.

Relevance

The teacher states that vocabulary, or lexical competence, is an important component of effective English communication. This is because it allows students to perform more confidently in oral and written activities.

The teacher said, "Vocabulary is the key to everything." A student may be familiar with some grammar, but they freeze if they have no words. When students grow their vocabulary, they feel confident in their speech, understanding what they read or hear and even risking to write more. All other language skills are possible through good lexical command as I have learnt from my experience.

Lexical competence is required for the communication of message at the theoretical level as it is the basis of communication. According to Wilkins (1976), that is without words nothing can be conveyed. Cassany et al. (1998) components of this can coherently interpret and express a meaning.

Communicating well helps people to understand, believe and contribute. Vocabulary is the basis of everything, according to the teacher. The teacher means that speaking, understanding, reading and writing can be guarantee by managing our lexicon. So, theory and practice agree that lexical competence acts as the conduit through which more fluent and meaningful communication takes place.

Nevertheless, it does not always take center stage in pedagogical practice due to other curriculum content taking priority, such as grammar, and lack of knowledge and resources to design specific materials. It is necessary to make sure that the lexical work is incorporated meaningfully in the English lessons by using contextualized teaching strategies making the students as participative as possible by developing their autonomous learning skills.

Meaningful contexts

A key factor in vocabulary learning enhancement are meaningful contexts. This are meaningful situations that the teacher presents to enhance students' vocabulary learning and recall. The teacher mentions that activities that connect the content to students' daily life are the most effective such as poster making, dramatization, projects related to the rural environment, etc. As the teacher explains:

“I invite them to create posters, infographics, comics, or descriptions of their family, their house, or their surroundings. In classroom projects, for example, they can interview a classmate and use new vocabulary. What I want is for them to see that English helps them talk about their lives.”

To elaborate on this, the teacher continues reflecting on how students’ personal ties to the language enhance retention and make them more active:

“Yes, totally. I recognize that students have a better retention of vocabulary when they link it to life. Children remember the words that they use to describe their house, a buddy, or a favorite game. But if learned just by memorization it is soon forgotten.”

Ultimately, the participant gives us particular classroom tactics that enable such meaningful engagement through practical, collaborative things:

“I give them a small task – a short journal they do in English or a small dialogue video they record at home.

I do conversational activities in class. I also make a vocabulary wall and online games. They feel more energized to speak up in groups and utilize their current knowledge if they work together.

The teacher shows the transformative role of contextualized learning practices in English teaching. When students link vocabulary to their personal lives and community realities, English becomes a useful tool of communication rather than just an academic subject.

This point of view agrees with the basic principles of the constructivist and communicative teaching approaches, which were reviewed in the theoretical framework.

Also, allowing collaboration and creativity teaches the students to own their learning, this is essential in places where students do not have exposure to the English language. As a result, helping students learn to understand the context of the language the vocabulary is acquired in, can make a student feel identified and motivated, belonging in the language.

Based on the surveys of the students, it was found that students show preference to participate in activities related to conversations, games, writing comprehension, listening comprehension and many more to learn English. However, they are not much fond of flashcards. Most teachers (62.5%) never speak English in their classrooms, while 29.2% actually speak English in their classroom. 8.3% uses English totally. All participants reported that the teacher encourages them to communicate in English. (Appendix 1).

Typically, students learn vocabulary by repeating or using the word in a sentence. Learners in this group prefer digital and audiovisual materials such as apps, videos, and songs. They want more group games and creative activities many eco-friendly and crafty showing a preference for active and collaborative learning strategies.

Experiences like these build lexical competence, motivation and feeling of belonging. When students feel motivated, they actively participate in their learning process and use vocabulary in meaningful contexts. In addition, belonging creates a trusting environment. As a result, students may better express their thoughts and ideas and remember more of what they learn. They enhance the learning of a language by integrating all of these.

Apart from unstable energy and internet services, limited ICT (Informative and communicative technologies) skills, lack of technological equipment at home and absence of didactic resources hindered the continuity of these strategies showing the need for teaching materials contextualized to local realities.

Teaching Practice

This category refers to the teacher's strategies, activities and assessment that are used to develop students' lexical competence. There are four subcategories: Strategies for Lexical Competence, Types of Activities, Vocabulary Practice, and Assessment.

These aspects help to identify how lexical learning occurs, which methods are used, and their level of contextualization and effectiveness in the English learning.

Strategies for lexical competence

This subcategory refers to combination of activities, methodologies and materials used by the teacher to impart and reinforce vocabulary learning in English. The teacher being interviewed says that the strategies are made in order to make vocabulary learning dynamic, meaningful and connected. The teacher uses interactive strategies and participatory formats, which bears out in the following statement:

“I try to make vocabulary teaching varied and dynamic. I use games, songs, role plays, and exercises that involve repetition, but always in context. Sometimes we make small projects, for example, describing their favorite foods, daily routines, or their town. The idea is that they learn English through topics that are familiar and relevant to them.”

This perspective supports the communicative and constructivist approaches which advocate the development of lexical competence (Nation, 2013; Richards & Rodgers, 2014) which further suggest that vocabulary should be taught using meaningful use and not in isolation. The teacher understands that using games, songs and contextualized projects in teaching will facilitate the learning process of the children better. However, the teacher is also aware that limited time, resources and size of classes makes this variety difficult to maintain sometimes. This shows that what teachers want is not compatible with what rural schools usually offer.

According to López (2020) mentions that, in rural contexts, teachers have to deal with the lack of didactic materials, access to technology, and adaptation of content to the sociocultural environment of the students. So, although the strategies of the teacher are in line with the theoretical principles of communicative teaching and contextualized teaching, their systematic implementation would require institutional and material support so that the lexical development takes place continuously and sustainably.

Typology of activities

The type of activities is conceived as a set of tasks to understand, memorize, apply and practice of lexis in varying contexts, having the aim of reinforcing understanding, retention and use of vocab in a proper way. The teacher points to the use of different classroom activities for vocabulary learning, such as:

“We do word games, matching activities, sentence completion, short readings, and vocabulary walls. Sometimes I use songs or videos to introduce new words and then have them use those words in sentences or dialogues. I also assign creative tasks, like posters or mini-presentations.”

The first two activities make use of an innovative technique and the following six activities employ a more traditional technique. The activities do allow recognition and different use of vocabulary. According to Nation (2013) and Thornbury (2002), using visual and auditory materials as well as speaking and writing tasks can help learners make use of different senses. They claim, among others, that exposure, repetition, and communicative tasks are important.

Including creative tasks and working in groups also allows students to learn collaboratively, which enhances their motivation and social skills (Johnson & Johnson 2009). Despite this, the teacher notes that the availability of digital devices and internet connection limits the frequency of such activities.

According to the results of a survey conducted on students, it has come out that they prefer interactive and participatory activities the most. These include games, listening and speaking exercises, and group works. As per results in the survey, 48% of the students primarily prefer group games, 20% watching videos or listening to music, 16% writing texts, 8% applications or online games and 4% creative activities as comics. Hence, students believe vocabulary learning to be more interesting and useful when it involves experience and collaboration (Appendix 1).

Vocabulary practice

Vocabulary practice involves exercises and activities that allow students to use vocabulary both orally and in writing, in order to reinforce and consolidate their mastery. The teacher reconfirms the need for vocabulary to be always reinforced and used in reality

“I always tell them that learning words is not about memorizing them once and forgetting. We have to keep using them: speaking, writing, and reading. In every class, I try to review old words before introducing new ones. Sometimes we play quick games to remember them or do oral warm-ups with questions using those words.”

This practice illustrates a key principle of lexical teaching presented by Nation (2013) – repetition and recycling in context. By constantly reviewing the vocabulary taught in the earlier classes with new words, it can be retained and transferred to situations requiring a different kind of communication.

According to Schmitt (2000), the teacher tries to show a word in various contexts, which gives students better lexical depth and fluency. The students added that they mostly learn vocabulary through repetition and through practice in sentences (though not always through visuals or contexts). This tells me that there is frequent reinforcement; however, there is still room to increase the variety of resources used to help with understanding and memory, e.g., graphic organizers, realia, technology, etc.

Assessment

Assessment refers to the process and tools that gauge how the students evolve and appropriate vocabulary to utilize them in communicative situations. According to the teacher in an interview, evaluation is formative and summative, and the intention is to find out about not only memorization but also practical use of vocabulary. The teacher says:

“I assess vocabulary through quizzes, writing tasks, and oral activities. I like to listen to how they use words in conversations or small presentations. I also include vocabulary questions in tests, but what interests me most is seeing if they can use those words in context.”

This view fits with communicative assessment principles, which stress assessing language in use, as opposed to assessing language (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). The teacher's contextual use shows an awareness that lexical competence must be linked to communicative performance.

Nonetheless, traditional testing is still important, as evidenced in the questionnaires, where most students said that vocabulary is often tested through written quizzes and tests. This hybrid evaluation model not only attempts to temper institutional demands but also serves to conceptualize the evaluation with a communicative view of language learning.

In this regard, Richards & Rodgers (2014) and Cassany et al. (1998) emphasize the importance of ongoing feedback and performance-based assessment to evaluate students' progress and tailor teaching approaches. So, the teacher's marking methods are consistent with communicative principles but could be enhanced if a greater variety of instruments (for example, self-assessment, peer-assessment) were implemented to promote reflection and autonomy.

Learning Practices

This category studies the ways of learning vocabulary by students, their preferences, levels of receptiveness, and socioemotional ‘factors that influence the process. There are four subcomponents that fall under the Learning component. In a rural educational context, these dimensions help investigate students’ behaviors and attitudes towards the lexical learning process in English classroom situations.

Learning Styles

These are the different ways in which students process, assimilate and retain English vocabulary as per their preferences and learning approaches. The use of games, group work, and projects in class activities is preferred by the students. as they show predominance of the visual and kinesthetic learning style. This indicates that these students are active in using their own physical involvement in creating or manipulating material to be studied, they engage different means of learning, like moving and specific senses in their creations. The preferences are consistent in the daily practice of the teacher as he states:

“Most of my students learn better when they can see or do something. They remember words more easily when they use colors, drawings, or gestures. When I just explain or dictate, they get distracted quickly, but when they participate or move, they get more engaged.”

This statement is in line with Gardner (1993) and Fleming (2001) who were noting the need to identify different intelligences and sensory modalities to adjust teaching methods. Through engaging in multisensory and collaborative tasks, students can enhance and retain vocabulary.

In addition, the answers given by the students in the questionnaires confirmed that they like learning with the use of songs, videos, and group games, which means that the use of visuals and experiences that respond to these dominant learning styles should continue (Appendix 1).

Observing more of these styles is indicative of the fact that more conventional approaches and black-board lectures may not work effectively with this population. This indicates a need for contextualized material engaging in movement, images and learning through play.

Receptivity

Through playful activities, receptivity is shown by students who are more ready to learn vocabulary. The students were quite responsive towards the learning of English and development of vocabulary. The survey reveal that all 100% of the students feel that the teacher motivates them to use English language in class, and most of them enjoy learning new words.

Nonetheless, many admitted that they only do this outside of school sometimes due to lack of resources or opportunities available in their community. The educator said this:

“They like English, especially when they see it in songs, videos, or when they can relate it to their lives. But at home, they don’t have much support or tools to keep practicing. Many don’t have internet access or English materials, so school is practically the only place where they are exposed to the language.”

This is described by López (2020) as one of the main hindrances of rural education. Consequently, student engagement and motivation play a key role in maintaining progress.

Teaching that is relevant, participative, and enjoyable is conducive to continuing high receptivity levels. Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000) holds that the need for autonomy, competency, and connection is essential to increase one's intrinsic motivation to learn. In this instance, the strategies employed by the teacher to connect vocabularies with students' lives are in favor of three of these.

Complexity

The second subcategory deals with the content which students find difficult to fathom and looks at the difficult and challenges faced by students in developing lexical competence. Some of the major problems are lack of effectiveness in learning English, poor retention of vocabulary and difficulty in using the words in real life. The teacher mentions:

“It's hard for them to remember vocabulary for a long time, especially if they don't use it. Also, many have low reading comprehension even in Spanish, which makes it harder to understand texts in English. I have to go step by step and constantly review.”

This reality is consistent with the results of Nation (2013) and Schmitt (2000) who maintain that lexical learning is slow and accumulation that must be repeated and varied. It is difficult to retain and apply vocabulary by EFL students especially where there is less input.

Possibly another relevant aspect would be the interference of mother tongue transfer. Certain students frequently use direct translation of the language, or use false cognates, which is characteristic of the early stages of lexical development.

It indicates the need to encourage students to use contextual guessing, word formation awareness, and semantic mapping for deeper lexical processing (Thornbury, 2002). Such strategies would help learners to go beyond basic level of comprehension to a more accurate use of English vocabulary.

However, students tend to make progress when vocabulary is connected to everyday life or its uses. This shows us the importance of linking lexical teaching with meaningful and culturally relevant contexts (Cassany, et al, 1998; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). Interacting vocabulary related to students lived experiences becomes essential to promote retention and meaningful communication.

Socioemotional Aspects

Students' classroom learning attitudes and performance are influenced by socioemotional aspects, a set of emotional and social components confidence motivation and teacher support that influence their participation and willingness to communicate in English.

The countryside in San Jacinto del Cauca fosters strong community ties, cooperation, and a feel-good atmosphere in classrooms. According to the teacher, this helps students feel more confident and participate:

“They are very supportive of each other. When I organize group work, they help their classmates, explain words, and encourage each other. That solidarity helps a lot because they don't feel afraid to make mistakes.”

The community's identity is built on the values of social identity, such as support for one another and endurance. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (1978) argues that learning happens through social interaction, which is found here.

Nevertheless, some of the students get insecure of speaking English in public due to their being afraid of making a mistake and getting laughed. One student noted in the open responses:

“Sometimes I don't speak because I'm afraid I'll pronounce it wrong, but I like when a teacher says that's ok to try.”

It is very important to strengthen emotional support and create a safe learning environment. According to Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis (1982) anxiety and low-self-esteem obstruct language learning. A teacher's empathy, encouragement, and positive feedback can help remove emotional hurdles and enhance linguistic participation.

The socioemotional well-being, motivation, and peer support are important predictors of lexical competence development, especially in low material situations.

V. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGY

A pedagogical strategy is the arrangement of teaching and learning actions that have been established to facilitate the construction of knowledge in a teaching and learning process. This is defined by Zubiría (2006) and can be summed up as “the translation of the pedagogical model into operational terms via planned sequences of teachings and learnings that favor the construction of knowledge”. Building on this idea, a pedagogical strategy involves using theoretical principles in the established and intentional actions of the classroom in order to promote the active participation of students and the achievement of learning goals. In other words, although the pedagogical proposal is the philosophy and theory of the teaching process, the strategy is the process of applying these principles.

This shows that pedagogical strategy incorporates an evolving process that is not a procedure as they seem to denote. Rather, they are processes that can be adapted to context depending upon the need, motivation and socio-cultural reality of students. In this sense, a didactic strategy establishes a dynamic and coherent articulation of the teacher’s methodological choices, resources, activities aimed at achieving meaningful learning.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2014) and Lewis (1993), the strategies being utilized in English language teaching should promote interaction in the communicative situation as well as lexical development through contextualized experience, which makes the process of teaching meaningful.

In the same manner, it raises the importance of pedagogical strategies contextualized to the reality of the rural schools of Colombia. Cárdenas and Miranda (2021), Ortiz and López (2022) and Castro (2020) highlight how these strategies help to connect the language being taught, with the students' environment. This, in turn, helps to motivate the students and strengthen their identity, along with improving their vocabulary and memory retention.

Given the above, a pedagogical strategy is a set of intentional, contextualized, and flexible actions that put pedagogical principles into practice in the classroom. It combines techniques and materials designed for effective learning and is active, communicative and culture-fair. In this study, Words That Connect Us is conceived as an instructional strategy to strengthen the English lexical competence of the rural students through engaging meaningful learning processes that are based on the local context.

Pedagogical Foundations

The Words That Connect Us strategy has four theoretical assumptions that allow pedagogical coherence and methodological integration of this educational proposal. The Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993) which is based on the synthesis of the concept that language learning hinges not on grammar but rather on the use of lexical chunks, that is, collocations, phrases and patterns of meaning. The viewpoint centers vocabulary as important for developing communicative competence. So this supports activities that present students with interesting and meaningful content. And secondly it encourages the productive use of words in contexts.

The strategy Words That Connect Us proposes the constant use of lexis through communicative tasks of dramatizations, projects and descriptive writing, favorable to the internalization of language but not by mechanics, rather by uses.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (2014) Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Vygotsky (1978) Sociocultural Theory provide parametric methodology that places learning as a socially mediated process. Looking at things this way, interaction, cooperation and dialogue are not only teaching-learning strategies but also conditions for cognitive, social and linguistic development. The strategy Words That Connect Us is based on these key principles: Peer collaboration and scaffolding; contextualized communication within a supportive classroom. The words and actions of teachers and their students stand out most. The use of Contextualized Pedagogy in Colombia (Cárdenas & Miranda, 2021; Ortiz & López, 2022), which is an approach which takes into consideration local realities, traditions and the sociocultural setting of the students. This pedagogical strategy under Words That Connect Us has been designed to promote learning the language is contextualized and enriching. It draws connections between English vocabulary and students' experiences within their communities. It is a way of aligning global language goals with local identity.

WORDS THAT CONNECT US: A CONTEXTUAL STRATEGY TO STRENGTHEN LEXICAL COMPETENCE IN RURAL ENGLISH CLASSROOMS

General Objective

To foster the strengthening of lexical competence in English through the integration of methodologies and materials among ninth-grade students at a public school located in a rural area of Colombia.

Specific Objectives

- To enhance students' understanding and acquisition of new vocabulary through contextualized and meaningful learning experiences.
- To improve oral communicative competence by promoting the use of new vocabulary in interactive and collaborative speaking tasks.
- To strengthen written communicative competence through guided and creative writing activities that integrate learned vocabulary.
- To incorporate multimodal methodologies that combine visual, auditory, and kinesthetic strategies to facilitate vocabulary learning.

Structure of the Strategy

In the intention of helping students find the language they use, both in the classroom and out of it, in other words, their vocabulary. Hence, the pedagogical proposal arises. People who live in the countryside have limited access to sophisticated technological devices. They also have limited contact with the real language.

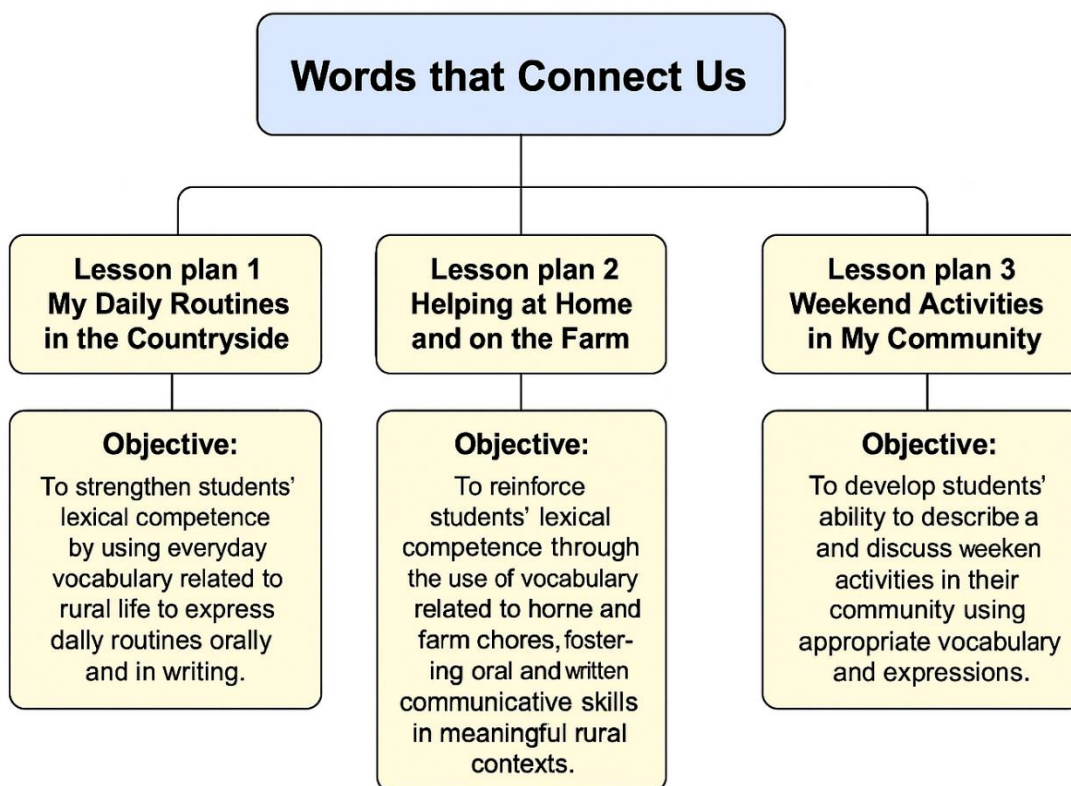
Consequently, they have little opportunity to practice communication. As a result, ‘Words That Connect Us’ is to make vocabulary learning more dynamic and contextualized with the life of the students.

The methodology is aligned with Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993); Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014); and Multimodal Pedagogy (Kress, 2010) principles. When using vocabulary students are familiar with it allows us to tap into their everyday lives and what they really value and want to talk about.

The strategy blends together collaborative play and rich contextual resources and gives educators a vocabulary instruction plan that can be open or structured while remaining committed to flexible, creative, and culturally situated school-based practices. The strategy is structured into the following interrelated stages, which run from comprehension to production:

Illustration 1

Structure of the strategy of the pedagogical Words that Connect Us.



Note: Author's own elaboration (2025).

Didactic Components

The didactic components of Words That Connect Us pedagogical proposal represent the operational bases in which to enact the pedagogical principles of the framework within a classroom.

Teaching Materials

The teaching materials designed to assist instructors in delivering Words That Connect Us strategy are low-cost, reusable, and contextually grounded resources that reflect students' local environment and experiences.

They mainly wish to make vocabulary learning relevant and accessible in a rural context where technical and commercial limitations often restrict access to commercial materials. The materials promote inclusion and creativity while allowing individuals to take ownership of their learning. Further, these materials utilize resources from the community and ask students to contribute to their creation.

The proposal produced illustrated lexical booklets that organize vocabulary around specific local themes like agriculture, family, festivals, nature which were the most relevant materials. Students also contribute to the creation of flashcards and picture dictionaries, reinforcing their awareness of words and how spelling works using visual associations. It also includes setting up bilingual word walls in classrooms that encourage the spontaneous use of new vocabulary during communicative activities and are in always view as reminders. Posters, board games, and other interactive activities that utilize recycled materials creates an atmosphere of motivation and collaboration as well as environmental sensitivity.

The instructional materials based on Mayer's (2001) multimedia learning principles help in better visual memory when text and image data are coherent and the latter is used for better storing of lexicon. Their roles allow learners to become independent and involved as they take an active part in developing their own materials. When creativity, cultural relevance, and pedagogical intention intersect in the learning process, vocabulary development can occur even in a low-resource setting.

Multimodal Methodologies

The Words That Connect Us Strategy is a method based on active learning that sees the student as the protagonist of his/her learning. Multimodal methodologies help the students to analyze, synthesize and evaluate rather than being passive receptors of content (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). The Words That Connect Us approach seeks to turn conventional English learning into an active and participatory experience, where students create knowledge through doing, collaborating and reflecting. This perspective aligns with the interpretative and sociocultural approach that the research is incorporated, characterizing it as one that is interactive and transformative.

Words That Connect Us brings together a wide variety of active strategies and activities within an overarching framework to engage children 26 words in. A critical component of the proposed model is game-based learning, as represented by Wright, Betteridge and Buckby (2006), which turns the classroom into a fun and communicative setting in which vocabulary is practised naturally and meaningfully. Games help you feel motivated, lower your stress, and make friends with teammates to grow the language.

The proposal adopts Project-Based Learning (PBL) (Ortiz & López, 2022), which allows students to use vocabulary to produce real tasks such as designing posters, interviewing, and preparing a presentation for the community. Through this process students create products or work on problems in collaboration with others, which enables them to become more independent and responsible in their real world language use.

Moreover, the Words That Connect Us approach uses visual scaffolding (Mayer, 2001) to aid understanding and memory through linking together the verbal and visual input. Visual resources such as pictures, flashcards and contextual posters help learners connect new vocabulary with events they have seen or places and physical objects they have touched. This is particularly useful in rural areas where the access to technology is limited.

By combining these multimodal methodologies, game-based, project-based and visual scaffolding, the methodology Words That Connect Us allows for the promotion of vocabulary acquisition as a learning cognitive but also emotional and social learning. By being involved, working together and being creative, we help students connect English with their local realities from a social point of view and a personal perspective. In a nutshell, a methodological stance values events that seem a little odd when compared to a more traditional approach. At the same time, it also holds the view that when vocabulary learning is an active, contextualized, and learner-centred work, effective lexical learning takes place. In addition, this design further corroborates the view of the learner as an agent of meaning and transformation.

Assessment

The assessment system planned for Words That Connect Us proposal is intended to be ongoing, formative and focused on the learning process, prioritizing support for students' development rather than simply assessing final outcomes.

The author Brown (2010) states that assessment in language learning should be diagnostic and reflective of the learners' strengths and weaknesses to assist instruction. In this context, evaluation is seen as part of the teaching and learning processes, so that both teacher and student can monitor the student's progress and make any necessary improvements with respect to vocabulary.

The strategy that Words That Connect Us uses assessment in three complementary parts diagnostic formative summative. The diagnostic stage is done through a vocabulary test that reveals the students' first lexical knowledge. That is useful to elaborate on the next ones. In this aspect, the teacher uses observation rubrics to assess students' oral participation, use of vocabulary in communicative activities, and overall engagement. The perspective of Black and Wiliam (1998) is clear on this aspect as they call formative assessment, a two-way interaction between teaching and learning that helps elevate students through feedback and reflection.

Along with teacher assessment, students are invited to participate in short writing activities in which they apply words meaningfully. This includes fill-in-the-blanks and short compositions. Furthermore, self-evaluation checklists are designed to enhance learner autonomy and metacognitive awareness. This means students can use them to consider their own learning, the difficulties they have faced and how they can best improve.

With this in mind, the much wider assessment gives the learner with scope to use assessment as a tool to learn and self-regulate.

By integrating diagnostic, formative, and reflective tools, the Words That Connect Us strategy fosters a culture of continuous improvement in which evaluation supports learning rather than interrupts it. Using this strategy doesn't just boost up the students' lexical competence. It also makes them active students who can pinpoint and steer their own language development.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of this research was achieved: the pedagogical strategy designed to strengthen the vocabulary of the ninth students of the Educative Institution Plácido Retamoza, through the design of a proposal. The study shows that vocabulary instruction based on the sociocultural reality of rural students can create a better and more lasting learning experience. According to the suggested strategy—Words that connect us, the vocabulary when connected to the experiences, tradition and environment of the learners promotes understanding, retention and functional use of English in real communicative situations.

Besides, the research affirms that the process of developing lexical competence is to be understood as a holistic one encompassing cognitive, affective, and sociocultural dimensions. The teacher to mediate, the use of contextualized materials, and the creation of inclusive learning environments empower communication and strengthen the student's cultural identity. The project combines a pedagogical proposal that contributes to bilingual education in rural areas from a critical, participatory and transformative view.

A prior initial phase to recognize that students' motivation and lexical appropriation were limited by the traditional method focused on the memorization of decontextualized vocabulary. Through observations, interviews and initial tests, it was noticed that there is a gap between the understanding of vocabulary and its use. Similarly, limited didactic resources, exposure to languages, and lack of rural-oriented materials also create difficulties.

Though there were constraints, the teacher made use of classroom communicative and playful resources to overcome these challenges. Also, there is evidence of innovative potential.

This process revealed that the development of lexical competence in rural contexts requires a holistic view of students' sociocultural and emotional realities. Not having context materials and limited access to technology, flexible, creative, and culturally sensitive approaches are essential. Thus, this moment was essential for the construction of a proposal coherent with the realities, necessities, and strengths of the rural educational community.

Through a process of theoretical consolidation, a robust framework grounded in the Lexical Approach (Lewis, 1993), Communicative Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) and the Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) was constructed. According to these views, lexis is at the heart of communicative competence therefore vocabulary needs to be taught meaningfully and in context.

Similarly, Nation (2013) and Schmitt's (2000) contributions led to the selection of exposure, repetition, and contextual practice among key elements for vocabulary learning. This theoretical basis not only strengthened the academic rigor of the research, but it was also important for designing the proposal consistent with the Colombian rural context. It was shown that vocabulary teaching has to be more than just memorizing, it needs to be active, multimodal, and affective.

Based on these understandings, the development and implementation of the Words That Connect Us strategy was the main research output. By basing the proposal on materials developed locally, multimodal methodologies and communicative activities relevant to students' sociocultural environment. Implementing this in the classroom improved students' vocabulary acquisition, created motivation and enhanced the positive association of English learning and their cultural identity. The findings showed that strategies that reduce the contextualization, playful character and multimodal nature favor the long-term and functional acquisition of vocabulary, even in the material and technological limitations typical of rural schools.

The anticipated effect of this teaching technique is apparent in the students' increasing confidence and meaningful use of English for oral and written communication. By means of learning in context, learners are likely to improve their vocabulary, strengthen their effective engagement, and foster a positive attitude towards English as a means of expressing oneself and linking to one's culture.

Similarly, the teachers are also expected to use more lively and interactive and multimodal methods in his/her teaching that involves students' active participation and a departure from rote memory techniques. The development of localized teaching materials is also a contribution for rural schools, which can utilize these adaptable materials due to the similarities in their educational realities across Colombia.

Overall, through the implementation and the Words That Connect Us framework, rural English teaching can be innovated. Furthermore, this innovation can happen when it values, builds on, and leverages learner identity, experience, and language. Furthermore, by placing vocabulary teaching in meaningful multi-modal community contexts, the development of lexical competence can go beyond just being a linguistic aim but can also be a form of empowerment, inclusion, and educational equity in Colombia's rural schools.

VII. LIMITATIONS

The research was conducted within a specific rural setting, so naturally, it will have several limitations in scope. To begin with, the research was narrow to one educational establishment called the Institución Educativa Plácido Retamoza, as well as one English teacher and twenty-five ninth graders. As a result, the findings mirror the realities and experiences of this specific context and may not accurately represent other rural schools with different socio-economic or cultural characteristics.

A shortage of technical and teaching resources was another constraint. Moving beyond the urban sphere, further-east contingency planning took into account an unstable internet connection, shortage of digital devices and learning materials. These limited activities or methodologies at times. Moreover, limitations in the academic calendar restricted the time available for data gathering and the entire application of the Words That Connect Us strategy. Even with these limitations, the research made considerable advances in understanding how context-specific materials can enhance vocabulary knowledge in alike rural settings.

Another limitation was related to the coverage of the linguistic assessment. Even though the measures visible like surveys, initial tests and observations collected qualitative data easily, they did not assess vocabulary retention over time or communicative transfer.

Not having an application phase of the proposal restricted us from assessing if there had been sustained lexical growth over time. Future studies may consider doing post-intervention evaluations to look at the long-lasting impact of contextualized strategies on students' linguistic and communicative skills.

Finally, as the researchers were in the classroom to observe the development of the class, this influenced classroom dynamics and student's performance during the intervention.

Even though methodological rigor and triangulation were applied to minimize bias, complete objectivity will be difficult to achieve in qualitative action research. Despite this, this participatory position contributed to the strengthening of a more authentic and transforming pedagogical proposal through the understanding of reality.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and reflections derived from this research, several recommendations are proposed for teachers, educational institutions, and future researchers interested in promoting lexical competence in rural EFL contexts.

For teachers, it is recommended to continue developing contextualized and low-cost didactic materials that integrate students' local culture, traditions, and daily life into English learning. Teachers should also encourage playful, multimodal, and cooperative methodologies that foster motivation, confidence, and active participation. Ongoing professional development and collaborative work among rural educators are essential to share strategies and strengthen pedagogical innovation despite resource limitations.

For educational institutions, it is advisable to support teachers with training programs, access to basic technological resources, and spaces for material creation. Institutional leadership should recognize the importance of contextualized bilingual education as a means to promote equity, cultural identity, and community engagement. Policies that prioritize pedagogical autonomy and the inclusion of local content in the curriculum can ensure that language learning remains meaningful and socially relevant.

Future research is encouraged to explore the long-term impact of contextualized strategies such as the Words That Connect Us model on students' lexical and communicative development, as well as their transferability to other rural contexts.

Expanding the scope of studies to include multiple schools, different grade levels, and comparative analyses could contribute to a broader understanding of contextualized pedagogies and their potential to transform English language education in Colombia's rural areas.

Finally, it is recommended that public educational policies and teacher education programs incorporate the principles of contextualization, cultural responsiveness, and linguistic inclusion identified in this research. By aligning national bilingual education initiatives with rural realities, Colombia can move toward a more equitable and sustainable model of language learning—one that values diversity, fosters social transformation, and empowers students as competent users of English within their own cultural contexts.



APENDIX

[Appendix 1.](#) Instruments

[Appendix 2.](#) Informed consent and assent.

[Appendix 3.](#) CEBIC Ethics Committee Documents.

[Appendix 4.](#) Lesson plans.

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