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VOCABULARY IN SPEAKING PERFORMANCE

Vocabulary in Speaking Performance

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Research Report submitted

in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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“I can do all this through Him who gives me strength.” – Philipians 4:13

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Abstract

The present work examined the importance of vocabulary in speaking identified in a group of adult employees from an Elementary English Class at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS hereafter) when they wanted to express their ideas in a second language. The participants of this action research recognized their inability to express their ideas verbally as one of the most difficult challenges in their language learning. Many factors influence the development of this skill, including language-learning environment, pedagogical tools and vocabulary acquisition, which is the focus of the present research. This study explored the importance of learners' attitudes towards speaking in English, their foreign language, and how their level of vocabulary knowledge influences their speaking performance.

The overall objective of this research was to examine the influence of learner's knowledge of vocabulary in the learning related to their business target language. The justification for this project is based on the identification of self-directed strategies that provided learners with the ability to create their own learning goals, find resources and strategies to overcome their lack of vocabulary. The strategy used to guide the participants throughout the research was the design and the implementation of reflective journals. The study sought to determine the effects that reflective learning journals have on the process of improving communication throughout vocabulary learning.

The researcher concluded that a learner speaking performance improves through the learners' knowledge of vocabulary, and reflective journals are an effective self-directed strategy for improvement in speaking performance. To conclude, the information gained through this study provided not only strategies for the intervention, as it approaches difficulties, including lack of vocabulary, but also served as a reference to previous research in this field. It is expected that the conclusions and recommendations will contribute to further research.

Key words: Vocabulary Acquisition, Self-directed Learning, Self-reflection, English for Specific Purposes, and Speaking.

Resumen

El presente trabajo examina la importancia del vocabulario en la producción oral identificada en un grupo de empleados adultos de una clase de inglés básico en Tata Consultancy Services (TCS de aquí en adelante); cuando ellos deseaban expresar sus ideas en un segundo idioma. Los participantes de esta investigación reconocieron su incapacidad para expresar verbalmente sus ideas como uno de los desafíos más difíciles en su aprendizaje del idioma. Muchos factores influyen en el desarrollo de esta habilidad como el entorno de aprendizaje, herramientas pedagógicas y adquisición de vocabulario, siendo esta última el enfoque de la presente investigación. Este estudio exploró la importancia de las actitudes de los estudiantes hacia la producción oral en inglés, su segundo idioma y cómo su nivel de conocimiento de vocabulario influye en su producción oral.

El objetivo general de esta investigación fue analizar la influencia del conocimiento de vocabulario en el aprendizaje relacionado con su lenguaje de negocios. La justificación de este proyecto se basa en la identificación de estrategias auto-dirigidas que fueron proporcionadas a los estudiantes para crear sus propias metas de aprendizaje, encontrar recursos y estrategias para superar su falta de vocabulario. La estrategia empleada para guiar a los participantes a lo largo de la investigación fue el diseño y la implementación de diarios reflexivos. El estudio buscó determinar los efectos que los diarios reflexivos tienen sobre el proceso de mejora de la comunicación a través del aprendizaje de vocabulario.

El investigador concluyó que la producción oral de los estudiantes mejora por medio del conocimiento de vocabulario y los diarios reflexivos son una estrategia de auto-dirección efectiva para la mejora de la producción oral de los estudiantes. Para concluir, la información obtenida a través de este estudio proporcionó no sólo las estrategias para la intervención, como los enfoques para las dificultades de falta de vocabulario sino que también sirvió como una

referencia de lo que se ha hecho con respecto a este campo. Se espera que las conclusiones y recomendaciones contribuyan para investigaciones futuras.

Palabras Claves: Adquisición de vocabulario, autoaprendizaje, autorreflexión, inglés para fines específicos y producción oral.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the study

The present work examined the communication difficulties identified by a group of learners from an A1/A2 English class when expressing their thoughts verbally in a foreign language. For many years, learners have recognized speaking as one of the most difficult skills to develop in language learning. Language learning is at times the result of direct instruction in the rules of language, and learners believe that one of their biggest challenges focuses on the ability to communicate in a second language. There are many factors that influence the development of this skill, including the language-learning environment, the pedagogical tools and the different strategies to deal with vocabulary acquisition processes, this last being the focus of the present research. This study explored the importance of learners' self-directed strategies towards ESL communication and how vocabulary influences speaking performance.

1.2 Rationale of the study

Speaking is one of the areas that shows with precision whether a speaker is competent or not, and vocabulary plays an important role in developing greater speaking skills. While mastering a second language, learning vocabulary is an essential part of the learning process (Schmitt, 2010). In fact, it is important that learners develop vocabulary strategies in order to master a second language. The strategy itself requires two components vocabulary and speaking.

The rationale of this project was based on the identification of a self-directed learning strategy that might provide learners with the ability to create their own learning goals and to establish sources and strategies to overcome their lack of vocabulary difficulty. The implementation of self-reflective journals was the strategy chosen to address this issue, and its main objective was to promote reflection regarding learning objectives, sources and strategies to

improve speaking performance. As Dejoy and Dejoy (1987) claimed “developing individual goals can motivate trainees to learn because they have the opportunity to describe the information they actually need for their specific work setting and skills” (p. 64); indeed, autonomous learning might take place because if learners want to overcome speaking performance difficulties at their workplace, they need to write their own reflections about language learning and generate effective action plans.

This research study attempted to help learners determine which kind of goals they can achieve and how they can design their own objectives regarding their lack of vocabulary. Du (2012) defined self-directed learning as a process in which individuals go step by step seeking improvement of a specific area. Firstly, they take the initiative motivated by themselves or by others. Secondly, they diagnose their learning needs and set learning goals. Finally, they identify resources for learning which contribute to the implementation of appropriate learning strategies.

This research study aimed at improving vocabulary teaching and learning, as well as at identifying learning strategies that might empower learners to become responsible for the improvement of their speaking performance through reflective learning journals. Reflective journals have been recognized as great tools for reflection and the point of references for further studies in different fields. As a consequence, reflective journals might enrich and provide key points to work towards the improvement of learners’ knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance.

Schmitt (2010) defined vocabulary learning as a part of a cyclical process during which one’s self-regulation of learning leads to improvements of vocabulary knowledge. The cyclical process starts by engaging students in the process of self-directed learning. Subsequently, by allowing them to recognize their vocabulary needs in speaking performance and possible

vocabulary learning strategies to address those difficulties, they might further be able to assess their process, and if results were not as expected, the process would start again.

1.2.1 Needs analysis and problem statement

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS hereafter) is an Indian multinational company with worldwide offices, which requires their employees to interact daily with different countries around the world. In Colombia, TCS offers English language courses to their Spanish speaking employees to help them improve their English speaking skills. Indeed, for the development of this research the teacher-researcher worked with employees from TCS aged 28-35 years old with a beginner English level (A1-A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference CEFR, 2013) who require a higher level of speaking skills. English speaking proficiency was seen by these participants as key to their advancement in the company and in their profession. They must master English in order to improve their professional opportunities and also to make them be understood by others, in the same way as they do in L1 in their specific areas with other company employees around the world.

The Elementary English instructor at TCS identified different speaking difficulties in learners. This situation has affected students' speaking performance because of the fact that in most of the cases they wanted to use English to express their ideas, but they were not able to. Therefore, a needs analysis was conducted with the population in order to validate the current study. Instruments including online questionnaires on the corporative network and paper based questionnaires were implemented in the needs analysis stage in order to collect data about the main insights and difficulties of language learning.

One of the instruments chosen for this needs analysis was a corporative network called Knome™ (see Figure 1). In this network polls, blogs and reflective questions were shared with

all students in order to gather information about students' perception about language. Therefore, strong evidence which served as a primary source for this exploratory research came from this corporative network. A poll about what was the most difficult skill of language learning revealed that speaking is considered as one of their main issues. In addition, TCS elementary students believed that their main objective for attending English classes was to improve their speaking skills. The data collected also revealed that the learners sought guidance in order to improve that skill because although they tried to carry out some activities, such as listening to music or writing words to approach this issue, they did not have a specific strategy for speaking.

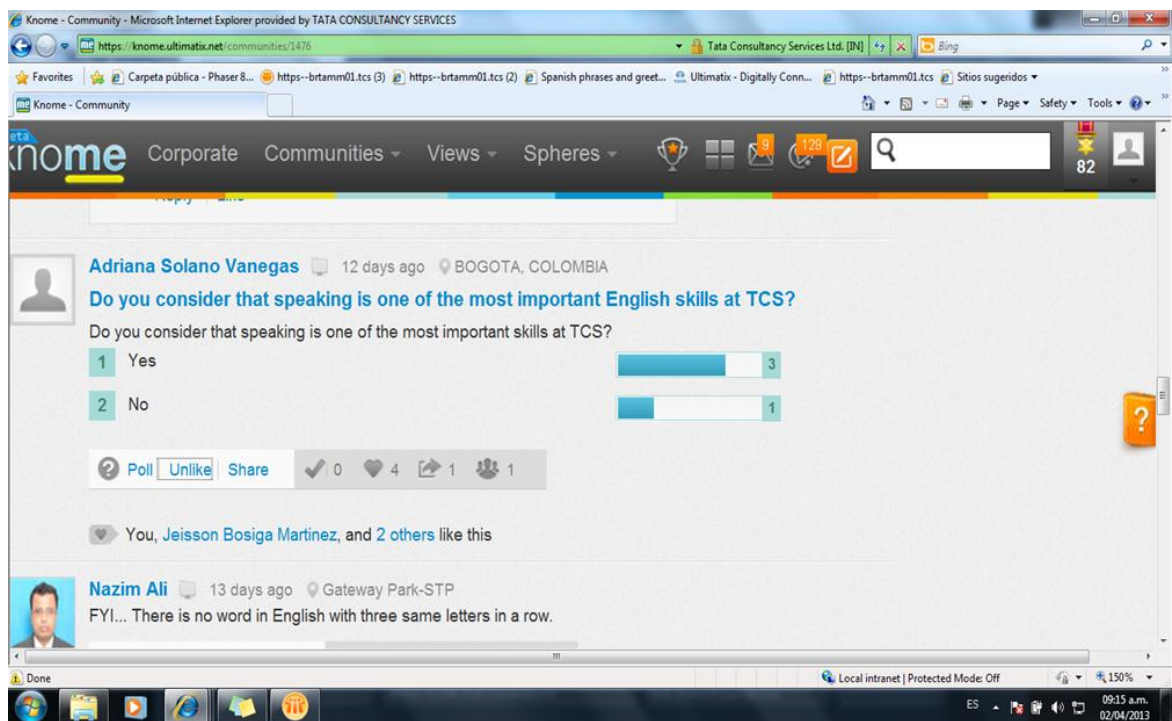


Figure 1. Screenshot from Knome Platform™ Survey 2

The data gained during this stage provided information regarding strategies to tackle learners' difficulties such as lack of vocabulary knowledge; it was also a reference point to learn the strategies, including listening to music and watching television programs in English, that the learners had been using to address this issue.

The findings of the data collected through these instruments (see Figure 2) highlight the importance of the current study because all the participants agreed that speaking was one of the most important skills at their work place and they were concerned about its improvement. During the implementation of the second questionnaire, it was evident that the participants believed that there was a strong relationship between vocabulary and speaking. Lack of vocabulary was recognized as a factor that made them unable to communicate effectively in a second language. They also recognized that a good range of vocabulary would help them to improve their speaking performance. All the previous findings led the researcher to conclude that their self-directed learning strategies needed to be improved, and that self-efficacy would require a lot of training if they want improvements in their speaking performance.

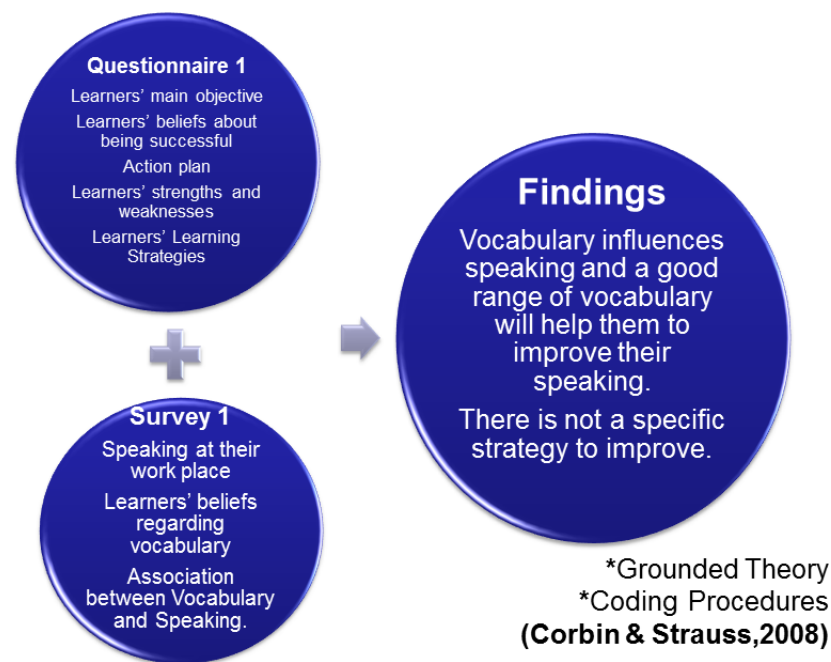


Figure 2. Needs Analysis Findings

1.2.2 Justification of problem's significance

It was very important to provide TCS learners with the tools necessary for their success in business communication by giving them the appropriate vocabulary to support them and help

them feel confident during English speaking situations. Various authors have written about the importance of learners directing their own learning process at work in order to have success: “In today’s constantly changing work environment, giving adults responsibility for their own learning is often the key to successful workplace training” (Dejoy, J., & Dejoy, D., 1987, p.64). Therefore, learners should be empowered to direct their learning process in order to be able to face the communicative challenges this business world brings. This study would be beneficial to promote the use of certain strategies to address vocabulary problems through self-directed learning based on the assumption that learners are responsible for their learning and their own success.

1.2.3 Strategy proposed to address problem

The study sought to determine the influence of reflective learning journals on the process of improving communication through vocabulary learning. It has been said that when self-study plans are created as a means of learners’ reflection upon their own language learning, this process is highly effective, due to the fact that learners can find appropriate learning resources, design learning strategies and generate action plans through activities that help them to reinforce their speaking performance, learners need to understand that a step of self-directed learning is when they are able to create self-study plans as a process of improving “their skills in identifying their learning needs, locating resources, and evaluating their performance” (Dejoy, J., & Dejoy, D., 1987, p.65). Therefore, developing self-study plans is one of the final steps that learners take in their process of becoming autonomous. In this respect, before learners design specific self-study plans, it is necessary to guide them in the process of reflection about the way they are learning; indeed, reflective journals might help learners to do so.

There is a connection between vocabulary, speaking and self-direction due to the fact that in this action research study learners are primarily responsible for recognizing and addressing their vocabulary needs for speaking performance. In this study, the teacher-researcher examined a selection of the theories behind vocabulary acquisition and how the selected self-directed strategy for learning vocabulary might influence learners' improvement in speaking performance. Du (1995) asserted that "reflective learning journals and study plans are tools to engage learners in Self-directed Learning (SDL hereafter) because they promote critical thinking, make sense of learning, and help with the design of learning plans" (p.224); therefore, an effective self-directed strategy that might help learners to not only overcome their difficulties in speaking but also foster autonomy can be reflective journals.

These factors were examined throughout the needs analysis stage in which questionnaires were implemented. It is hoped that this study will contribute to future investigations about how the lack of vocabulary affects second language speaking performance and how reflective learning journals are a possible strategy to overcome this language difficulty. The following research question guided this study:

1.3 Research question and objective

- How might a self-directed strategy such as reflective learning journals help A1/A2 learners' knowledge and use of vocabulary in speaking performance?

These learners recognized the lack of vocabulary as one of the most important obstacles they faced on their second language learning in order to communicate effectively; therefore, this research study aimed to accomplish the following objectives:

Main Objective

- To examine how learner's knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance is influenced through the use of daily reflective learning journals.

Specific Objectives

- To identify vocabulary strategies used by learners to improve their speaking performance.
- To determine how learners exercise individual self-directed learning reflective actions to foster knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance.

1.4 Conclusion

The following research is divided in six chapters. The first chapter includes an overview regarding the study and justification for the study. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework based on the existing and relevant studies or theories related to the constructs which support this study. The third chapter describes the type of study, the characteristics of the context, participants, data collection instruments and procedures. Chapter Four includes data collection, intervention and implementation. Chapter Five is related to the results and its corresponding data analysis. Finally, Chapter Six includes the conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter includes the theoretical framework and research studies related to the main topics guiding this study. The researcher starts with an introduction and the definition of the main constructs that support this action research. Additionally, there are several studies related to the use of corpus, reflective journals and self-directed strategies.

2.2 Definitions

2.2.1 Vocabulary Knowledge

Vocabulary has been seen as a component in the process of language learning, but during recent years the importance that both learners and teachers have given to vocabulary, in order to improve their language skills, has become more evident. In other words, learners often perceive vocabulary as one of the most important components in language learning. Vocabulary is now seen as having a legitimate place among the most important language skills, including writing, listening or reading, because it enriches the human capacity for expressing and transmitting ideas through different forms. Vocabulary often provides key elements that contribute to a speaker's competence adding value and different perspectives to their speech.

Nowadays, vocabulary knowledge is an important feature in language learning; in fact, it is now argued as a process connected with language use. When learners are in the process of acquiring a new language, they require vocabulary knowledge, and in order to incorporate new words, they need to understand the use of them within the language. Nation (2010) explained, "Vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language

use and so on” (p. 3). Therefore, language learning is a cyclical process where both vocabulary knowledge and language use are benefited.

Vocabulary knowledge helps us to deal with our daily language tasks, such as conversations (both listening and speaking), reading information, and written communication. Additionally, it contributes to the way we express and communicate our ideas to others. Indeed, when we are creating statements, one of the first issues is deciding what kinds of words will be required; then secondly, we consider the lexical usage of those words. Most of us feel that the words we use determine who we are. Stahl (2005) asserted: “Words can define, to the outside world (and maybe even to ourselves), how smart we are (or think we are), what kinds of jobs we do, and what our qualifications for jobs might be” (p. 95). Therefore, the TCS English program aims to teach learners to speak professional English thereby ensuring that customers perceive the TCS staff as knowledgeable and able to support any business needs around the world. TCS wants to train its staff in order to acquire the English level they might have according to their professional level. TCS wants to be recognized as a multinational company in which all its associates have excellent standards of English knowledge so that customer feels confident that they are being served by qualified professionals with whom they can communicate easily.

Learning vocabulary is an ongoing process that requires time and practice. Different studies have found that vocabulary is a key component for language learning success. Moreover, these studies have identified different strategies for learning meaningful vocabulary for the improvement of communication skills. Strategies such as skimming and scanning for words have been used in multiple contexts like reading, listening or writing in order to help learners acquire words in different situations and with different functions. YongqiGu (2003) argues that learning new words through context is “only one step students may use, and that students should think

metacognitively and learn new words within the context of where they appear” (p. 14); learning new words in context, in fact, requires that students have a high level of self-directed learning because this demands that learners go beyond the input received in class about vocabulary. First, it requires learners to use metacognitive strategies in order to raise awareness of the importance of vocabulary in speaking performance. In this way learners may be able to set a specific self-directed strategy which allows them to acquire the words they will need during a spoken communicative event, such as a conversation.

Hence, vocabulary learning implies an in-depth study that goes beyond a simple definition. Richards (1976) and Nation (2001) listed various relevant elements in the study of words:

The meaning(s) of the word, its spoken and written forms, what “word parts” it has (e.g., any prefix, suffix, and “root” form), its grammatical behavior (e.g., its word class, typical grammatical patterns it occurs in), its collocations, its register, what associations it has (e.g., words that are similar or opposite in meaning), what connotations it has, its frequency and if it has a strategic use on conversation or academic writing (p. 18).

The identification of all these possible features of a word needs to be considered by learners if they want to overcome their lack of vocabulary knowledge. Schmitt (2010) asserted that it is necessary to have more than a superficial understanding of the meaning of a word; learners need to understand the formal features, syntactic functioning and collocations among others characteristics of a word. As a result, when learners expand their knowledge of words and enrich their vocabulary, their speaking performance might have changed dramatically. In fact, a

superficial understanding of words will limit learners speaking competence because they will not be able to use the appropriate words to communicate their ideas.

Once learners raise their awareness about the importance of studying vocabulary in depth, it is necessary that the researcher guide them in the differentiation of active and receptive vocabulary. Vocabulary is classified based on its use in active/productive or passive/receptive functions. An active/productive vocabulary consists of the words learners use to speak or write, while a passive/receptive vocabulary is related to the words learners recognize and understand but do not necessarily produce. Therefore, the question of which kind of vocabulary learners need to be able to use is constantly raised by researchers. McCarten (2007) averred: “Students often feel frustrated that they can understand more than they can produce, but explaining this issue of active versus passive knowledge as a normal part of learning can be reassuring [for learners]” (p.19). Indeed, if instructors teach learners the difference between active and passive vocabulary, learners will be able to identify the reasons why they understand more of what they actually produce. For instance, learners can sometimes use their passive/receptive vocabulary to get the main idea of a conversation, reading or listening, but they are not capable of using all these words in their speech because these words are not part of their productive vocabulary.

When learners are developing their vocabulary knowledge, they must consider two resources: oral and print. Hiebert and Kamil (2005) described these two forms as “receptive-that which we can understand or recognize – and productive-the vocabulary we use when we speak” (p.6). On one hand, oral vocabulary (active/productive vocabulary) refers to the meaning of the words learners know and use through conversations, music, videos and movies. On the other hand, print vocabulary (passive/receptive vocabulary) consists on the meaning of words from which meaning is known when learners write or read silently, the skills they use to enrich their

print vocabulary are mainly reading and writing. However, learners can know the print vocabulary of certain words, but they are not able to use those words. As a result, it is necessary to establish a transition between passive to active vocabulary. One of the elements that will help learners to improve their speaking performance is the function they give to those words that are well-known, and used frequently by the learner.

To have a wide range of vocabulary does not guarantee fluency, but in order to have the ability to communicate spontaneously and naturally, speakers must have access to vocabulary specific to their needs. For example participants in this study needed knowledge of and competency in business English. Alderson (2005) asserted that the size of vocabulary is relevant to the speaking performance, i.e. language ability is a function of vocabulary size, to a large extent. In fact, one criterion in the selection of target words for vocabulary studies is frequency. McCarten (2007) emphasized: “language learners typically acquire higher frequency vocabulary before lower frequency vocabulary, so matching the vocabulary frequency to the level of the participants in a study is important” (p.14). If learners are able to connect the higher frequency words with their daily work place needs, they are more likely to learn the necessary number of words and also they might become more fluent in their speaking performance.

2.2.2 Reflective Journals

Another issue to consider is the importance of vocabulary within the syllabus. Unfortunately, there are times an English syllabus overemphasizes grammar rather than language use. Learners’ knowledge of grammatical features is sometimes admirable, but at the same time confusing because they are not able to communicate effectively. In fact, it is important to show learners that language learning is more than grammar; it demands a balance between vocabulary and grammar. Wilkins (1972) argued “without grammar very little can be conveyed, without

vocabulary nothing can be conveyed” (p. 20). In order to keep that balance between language use and vocabulary, it is necessary to address an effective strategy for the incorporation of new vocabulary into the syllabus. As Laufer and Hulstijn (2001) claimed the incorporation of new vocabulary demands a strategy based on three components: need, search and evaluation. *Need* is the requirement for a linguistic feature in order to achieve some desired task, *search* is the attempt to find the required information and *evaluation* refers to the comparison of the new word information to prior knowledge. In fact, reflective journals constitute themselves a feasible self-directed strategy because they attempt to address vocabulary learners’ needs, which promote the searching of resources in order to improve their speaking performance and also enhance the evaluation of action plans generate by learners in order to improve their vocabulary knowledge in speaking performance.

Based on these criteria, reflective journals might be an effective self-directed strategy for learners in order to recognize their needs, search for a learning strategy that fits their needs, and finally assess their own strategies. This study attempted to foster learners’ autonomy by fostering self-directed learning.

2.2.3 Self-directed learning

Self-directed strategies may then become seen as a definite factor in vocabulary learning. Learners need to play an active role in their learning process not only in terms of what kind of vocabulary they want to learn but also in terms of setting the appropriate strategies to do so. YongqiGu (2003) also pointed out that “vocabulary acquisition is a learner-centered activity with the effectiveness of the learner’s strategies depending on his/her attitude and motivation towards new vocabulary acquisition” (p. 2). Therefore, as teachers it is important to present vocabulary as a language friendly feature for learners in order to engage them in leading their own learning

process, which will increase their speaking performance as well as promote more interaction between learners in the classroom.

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) is defined in Candy's Four-Dimensional Model (1991) and presented by the umbrella concept which is mainly about self-direction from four dimensions. These include: as a personal attribute (personal autonomy); as the willingness and capacity to conduct one's own education (self-management); as a mode of organizing instruction in formal settings (learner-control); and self-direction as the individual non-institutional pursuit of learning opportunities (autodidaxy). This complete definition regarding self-directed learning helped to determine and describe the dimensions that were considered in order to promote self-directed learning in the target population.

Brockett and Hiemstra's Personal Responsibility Orientation Model (PRO) (1991) also provided a rationale regarding SDL as a process "in which a learner assumes primary responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating the learning process" (p.24) or as a goal, which focuses on "a learner's desire or preference for assuming responsibility for learning" (p.29). From this perspective, one of the crucial contributions of Brockett and Hiemstra was to consider the social context, as the physical institution where this research took place- the TCS office. Summing up, Candy's umbrella concept and Brockett and Hiemstra's contribution of the social context were considered as the Self-Directed Learning constructs for this research.

Additionally, Kerka (1999) adhered to Brockett and Hiemstra's arguments, namely, that SDL is based in fostering autonomy in learners who decide to undertake learning for personal growth, and how individualistic attitudes contributed to lifelong learning. In this light, the aim of the current research was to make students aware of the effectiveness of self-directed strategies so

that learners would be able to incorporate them to their learning goals and considering some possible changes in their attitudes and values of learning.

Self-directed learning leads to different outcomes which match the aim of promoting autonomy in the participants. Hiemstra (1994) explains that learners under self-directed instruction can become empowered to take responsibilities and make decisions about their learning endeavor. Additionally, SDL also promotes learning transfer in terms of knowledge and skills. As a matter of fact, it includes different activities and resources regarding reflective writing, such as one of the instruments implemented in this research, which was the use of self-reflective journals to identify strategies to improve vocabulary problems related to speaking performance.

2.3 State of the art

The following studies examined areas of study in English language learning that are similar to those analyzed in the present study. The main objective is to describe their goals and findings in order to see how they might contribute in the design, exploration or selection of specific strategies in the process of learners' knowledge of vocabulary.

Relationships between Productive Vocabulary Knowledge and Speaking Performance of Japanese Learners of English at the Novice Level

The study was conducted during 2005 and examined the relationship between productive vocabulary knowledge and speaking performance. In this research, productive vocabulary knowledge is considered to be the ability to produce a word in both speaking and writing tasks. This paper was about the importance of productive vocabulary only in speaking performance.

The participants in this study were Japanese learners of English at the novice level (i.e., third-year junior and first-year to third-year senior high school students in Japan). Two tests were

used as instruments: (a) the Productive Vocabulary Knowledge Test and (b) the Speaking Test. These kinds of tests provide potentially positive tools if as researchers we want to have quantitative facts about areas which may enrich our study with information about our population. However, the current research aimed to validate the importance of vocabulary knowledge in speaking performance.

The conclusion of the study demonstrated two points. First, Japanese learners of English at the novice level improve their speaking performance related to vocabulary without pre-task planning time. They improved on aspects such as fluency, accuracy in a task, one element of syntactic complexity, and one element of lexical complexity. Second, it was demonstrated that the size of productive vocabulary knowledge is related to the accuracy in a task.

The results of this study showed that fluency and accuracy in speaking performance were improved through vocabulary instruction, which reinforced the fact that vocabulary played a very important role in speaking skills.

The Impact of Task-based Approach on Vocabulary Learning in ESP Courses

This study, conducted by Sarani and Farzaneh in 2012, investigated the teaching of vocabulary in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses within the paradigm of task-based language teaching, concentrating on Persian literature students at Birjand University in Iran. This study determined whether teaching ESP students through task-based approach can be influential and practically useful in ESP vocabulary improvement. The results demonstrated that ESP can have a positive result on vocabulary improvement to later on enrich speaking performance. The researcher concluded that selecting key vocabulary related to the English learning purpose will ensure the improvement of speaking.

A sample of 60 BA (Bachelor of Arts degree) students of Persian literature aging from 18-25 in Birjand University of Humanities participated in this study. After the vocabulary test, 50 of them were selected and were assigned randomly to two groups of 25, a control group and an experimental group. The participants came from various socioeconomic backgrounds and different cities of Iran. The population of the current research has the same socioeconomic background.

Students in the control group were taught vocabulary lessons using a traditional approach, whereas those in the experimental group were taught technical vocabularies on the basis of task-based approach. The instruments used were a vocabulary pre-test, teacher-made technical vocabulary pre-test and teacher-made technical vocabulary post-test.

The researchers concluded that the task-based approach was more effective in teaching technical vocabulary compared to the traditional approach. A task-based approach was more effective in comparison with the traditional ways of teaching vocabulary because it was focused on learners needs and in new ways to approach learning.

*Comparing the Vocabulary Learning Strategies of High School and University Students:
A Pilot Study*

The aim of this study was to investigate the role of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) in Hungarian secondary and tertiary educational institutions. There were 84 high school students in their last year at Karinthy Frigyes Dual Language School in Budapest and 66 university students, all of whom were English majors at EötvösLoránd University in Budapest.

The researchers sought to answer questions about the learners' vocabulary use in high school and the university, the situations in which learners' found new words, and the strategies the learners adopted as their language proficiency developed. A questionnaire was applied in

order to collect data, and two conclusions arose in response to each one of the questions: the number of strategies for practicing on a regular basis and using word lists for consolidation decreases as the level of the students improves. In contrast, the strategies of skipping a new word, putting words into sentences and pronunciation become more important as students become more advanced. Additionally, there was no significant difference between the different groups of students or between the strategies they listed for discovering new vocabulary; additionally, the most popular strategy listed was guessing from context, followed by the use of monolingual dictionaries. Finally, it was shown that students at higher levels use more strategies, which is definitely a positive finding; however, possible reasons for this are still to be discovered.

The conclusions of this research contributed to the selection of a self-directed learning strategy that undoubtedly enhanced speaking performance and the effective design of research instruments. The elements considered were how the level of English proficiency affects the preference of using specific techniques, the adaptation of more strategies at advance levels, and finally the fact that inferring by context and bilingual dictionaries are the most popular strategies for learning vocabulary. These conclusions served as reflection questions in the design of the questionnaires, pedagogical intervention and reflective journal design.

How to Increase Student's English Vocabulary by the Extrapolation of Categories in Popular American Songs.

This research work was conducted during 2001 in Bogota by Corredor, an English teacher. This study explored how students are able to increase their vocabulary to refer to the qualities or properties of beings. It attempted to solve the problems of acquiring and increasing vocabulary under the pressure of subjecting learners to popular English songs which they listen

to and complete cloze exercises with lyrics according to word categories. In fact, the purpose was to increase student's vocabulary so that they could improve their English skills through a substitution technique.

The findings of this study revealed that learners' vocabulary improved regarding the specific words from songs, but at the same time it showed that there was a limitation for learners at the moment of using the vocabulary in other context rather than songs. Even though they became familiar with the substitution technique, the learners' English skills did not show a meaningful improvement. Learners were able to participate actively only in classes where songs were included because they reported that they have enough words to carry out the tasks.

This study contributes to the present study by validating the importance of providing learners with not only the necessary vocabulary to express themselves but also enough learning strategies that allow them to follow up their language learning as well as foster long-life learning. As a result, vocabulary instruction without setting a close context for learners may result in the learning of no more than a couple of words and nothing beyond.

Collective Exploration of Vocabulary in Cartoons and Its Impact on Communicative Competence.

The purpose of this study conducted in 2000 was to test whether students can collectively solve vocabulary problems and use the new vocabulary acquired for extended oral stories. The study aimed to measure the impact that vocabulary activities such as inferring word meaning from their contexts had on learners' communicative competence. Additionally, this research also studied the influence of collective activities on students' autonomy.

The results showed improvement in written and oral production. In fact, the results also revealed that vocabulary should not only be taught, but that it requires a full understanding of

learners' needs; therefore, lessons may become no more than simple vocabulary exercises but they may also provide learners the opportunity to be the constructors of their own knowledge. The results of this study highlight the importance of connecting vocabulary with learners' contexts as well as the importance of fostering autonomy while learners learn.

Student' Teacher Development of Pedagogical Knowledge through Reflection.

The present study was carried out at the Nacional University in Colombia during 2004. It was considered because it studied the importance of students' development of knowledge through reflection. Reflective journals were considered as a self-directed strategy in order to explore how students' reflection helped them to increase their knowledge. Students needed to write reflective journals after their counselor shared their observation notes with them in individual conferences during their teaching practicum.

The findings included an increasing need from the students to update their knowledge by the inclusion of reflection and self-assessment. The study revealed that learners experienced a transformation and a meaningful improvement in their own learning strategies by reflection. Additionally, the target population of this study considered that collaborative learning allowed them to explore different ways to approach learning as well as tools to self-assess their work.

2.4 Conclusion

The studies described above have contributed to this research in different areas of English language development related to speaking performance, vocabulary, task-based approach, English for specific purposes and self-directed learning. Firstly, the studies underlined the importance of productive vocabulary knowledge in speaking performance. In fact, productive vocabulary showed to improve the accuracy in speaking and writing tasks while there was direct vocabulary instruction. Secondly, these studies highlighted the importance of a task-based

approach to enrich lesson planning with effective tasks. Additionally, they showed how English for specific purposes can help to set the ground with concrete vocabulary according to learners' needs and allow learners to enrich their vocabulary knowledge. Thirdly, these studies also set the relevance of looking for vocabulary learning strategies, including word lists, to measure learners' knowledge as well as the need of a self-directed learning strategy that allows learners to track their progress. Finally, these studies also explored some of the benefits of reflection and specifically reflective journals in order to improve learners' knowledge and help them to self-assess their own work.

In conclusion, these studies inform this current research in terms of the relevance of an adequate lesson design for the pedagogical implementation, according to the research question that guides this study. This objective can be achieved when teachers design tasks that are appropriate for the specific purpose of their English curricula and incorporate a vocabulary strategy that allows them to improve their speaking skill. Furthermore, these studies also emphasized the importance to carefully consider learners' needs in order to choose the appropriate self-directed learning strategy that allow learners not only to track their learning but also to self-assess their work.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.1 Introduction

In view of the information presented in the two preceding chapters, the following chapter describes the research design, the methods and certain ethical considerations regarding the specific context of the population.

3.2 Type of study

Qualitative research (QR hereafter) was the line of investigation in which the current research was framed. QR is defined by Denzin and Lincoln (2000) in their *Handbook of Qualitative Research* as an activity that allows the teacher –observer to understand and transform its context through interpretive and material practices. In this respect, QR involves an interpretive naturalistic approach that includes field notes, interviews, and questionnaires among others, in order to study and interpret a phenomenon observed. Furthermore, QR tries to make sense of the meanings people give to specific phenomena and attempts to answer questions that search for generating an innovative transformation (pp.2- 3).

This research followed certain methodological stances associated with qualitative research based on Snape and Spencer's perspective (2003, p.6):

- Perspective of the researcher and the researched: The researchers use personal insights while taking a non-judgmental stance.
- Nature of research design, generation and methods.
- Research design: flexibility in the research strategy and conducting naturalistic inquiry rather than experimental or manipulated.
- Data generation.
- Research methods: surveys and focus groups are used.

- Analysis and interpretation includes the analysis, explanation of the emergent facts from the data.

Furthermore, QR works together with Action Research (AR hereafter) which mainly attempts to introduce changes in the classroom after conducting a reflective practice. According to Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p.8), AR follows four broad phases within a reflective research cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. This cyclical AR research model starts by the identification of a problem, and continues with the development of an action plan in order to bring improvement into their specific research context. During the whole process the researchers observe, collect, reflect and analyze data in order to validate their study.

While doing AR, reflection is an important action. Schon (1982, p.8) claims that researchers need to reflect in-action and on-action. Reflect-in- action is to analyze the spontaneous way of thinking and acting, while reflecting-on-action is about what happened after the event of teaching, responses, thoughts, decisions and feelings and our reactions to all of these elements. This requires metacognitive process and directs the research to a successful intervention.

3.3 Context

This research study took place at Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) in Bogota - Colombia. TCS, which originated in India, is now one of the biggest companies in technology around the world. In Colombia they are consultants of Information and Technology solutions for the main companies of the country. This company offers English training to the TCS employees (TCSers, hereafter) with the aim of improving their language proficiency in speaking as well as in writing. This training seeks to address specific corporate standards regarding the English language in

order to maximize the TCSers' professional potential around the world. Most of the TCSers are System Engineers.

Regarding learners' English schedule, each week they have two hours of face-to-face class and two hours of autonomous English learning on a company platform called Knome, where they find different sources to reinforce topics studied. There are three levels of instruction: elementary, intermediate and advanced. The students are required to give support, develop and design solutions in information and technology (IT) to customers using English. TCS has different clients around the world, so communication among clients and consultants is mainly in English. Employees participate in meetings, training, video conferences and calls in which they need to interact with different people interchanging information and knowledge.

3.3.1 Participants

The participants of this research were thirteen students in the elementary course, but due to their constant travel and new allocations, the sample from this course was reduced to nine TCSers between twenty-five and thirty-five years old. They work for different teams inside the company. All of them have professional degrees and have years of experience in the IT field.

Overall, the participants' English proficiency level corresponds to A1- A2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR, 2013). All of them wanted to reinforce listening and speaking skills because these skills are the most useful at TCS. They were willing to learn English because they had opportunities to grow professionally in the company and travel to other branches of the company around the world.

The learners' main linguistic need was to improve their communicative skills because they needed to talk every day with international customers, especially with people from India. Their main objective was to be able to participate in telephone calls, video conferences,

information exchanged through email and training. At the company, learners have opportunities for working in other countries and assuming different roles if they are able to demonstrate higher English proficiency. Their technical knowledge is required to solve issues around the world, but its effectiveness depends on their accurate use of the English language. These learners' affective needs were based on their English proficiency, and how this helped them to increase their growth possibilities. They were highly engaged with the English program due to the fact that through this they were able to demonstrate their interest in learning a second language. They could also interact with other employees from different areas, which not only allowed them to share technical knowledge but also to practice English.

In every class students had the opportunity to communicate their feelings and perceptions regarding the topic studied, which gradually allowed them to increase their self-confidence in English and avoid frustration. Learners' cognitive needs were mainly about being more effective at their workplace tasks such as closing business agreements and designing the appropriate documentation for new software applications.

3.3.2 Researcher's role

In this study the researcher was a participant-observer because the teacher was involved in the activities of the classroom by monitoring, observing and recording actions of the participants. This kind of role implied looking more at issues and required researcher commitment with a high level of critical thinking about their context.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

All participants were invited to join and be active members of this study. In fact, the researcher protected their identities against inadvertent harm. Polonski (2004, p.52) stressed that because the participants were voluntarily helping, they needed to have a clear understanding of

what would be required of them and an assurance that they would not have any negative results. Therefore, the researcher explained that their decision about whether to participate in this study or not would not affect their grade for the course.; therefore, it was important to clarify that their participation in the study would not have any consequence for their final grades if they did not assist the researcher.

Privacy and confidentiality were among the ethical issues to consider. All the TCSers signed confidential and anonymity consent letters voluntarily. The participants also knew that the researcher would share the results with them. Polonski (2004) asserted: “Confidentiality and anonymity are potentially even more important when you are researching other staff within your own organization” (p.59); therefore, during data analysis coding techniques were carefully addressed in order to protect participants’ identity and ensure that neither the researcher nor the company were able to identify specific responses.

3.4 Data collection instruments

During this research three kinds of instruments were used: a corpus, reflective journals and focus groups. The aim was to collect information about participants’ beliefs regarding the influence of vocabulary in speaking performance. It was also important to analyze to what extent their perceptions affected their self-directed learning.

3.4.1 Description

3.4.1.1 *Corpus*

A corpus is a collection of words classified by its use and divided into sections according to related categories. The corpus designed for this research was one designed for English for specific purposes, based on business situations. A corpus is a tool for learning vocabulary and self-assessment. When a corpus is well-designed, it shows us the frequency of use of certain

words, the differences between speaking and writing and also the context of use. In this research, two corpora were at the center of the study. One of them was designed based on the contributions of the teacher-researcher and the learners in a brainstorm section with the most typical words found in their contexts; the second was a corpus of expressions for giving presentations.

Frequency is one of the most important characteristics of a vocabulary corpus. Schmitt (1999) agreed with this argument claiming that one of the key elements to succeed in studies with corpus is to select the frequency of target words for vocabulary studies carefully. Schmitt (1999) asserted that “language learners typically acquire higher frequency vocabulary before lower frequency vocabulary, so matching the vocabulary frequency to the level of the participants in a study is important.” (p.14). Therefore, because learners were involved in the design of the first corpus, they were able to include higher frequency vocabulary, making this activity more meaningful for them and enriching for the study purposes.

3.4.1.2 Focus group

A group moderator was in charge in order to guide a discussion and to analyze a research topic or issue. Focus groups were useful for exploring ideas and obtaining in-depth information about how people think about an issue. There were several benefits to using a focus group to collect data such as the exploration of ideas and concepts in a free spoken context.

One of the important aspects of conducting a focus group is to stimulate the discussion, encourage the participants to share their ideas, and describe clearly the dynamics to follow. The moderator recorded the focus group in order to analyze in detail not only the answers, but also their emotional reactions, as well as to store the information.

After the focus group was finished, the moderator needed to transcribe notes, and code the topics and issues discussed by highlighting the comments made on each topic or issue.

3.4.1.3 *Reflective Journals*

The main reason to consider reflective journals was the continuing opportunity learners have to self-direct their own learning. The aim of using reflective journals was to guide learners in a process of reflection and have a deep understanding of the phenomena studied. Smith (1999) claimed when learners keep records, they are able to monitor their practice, and when it is in written form, sometimes it enables learners to understand a particular problem and the reason why it is hard to achieve. Through this process learners were able to identify their strong points and weak areas in order to generate appropriate strategies to overcome those difficulties.

3.4.2 **Validation and piloting**

3.4.2.1 *The pre-planning stage –needs analysis*

During the preliminary stage of needs analysis, a survey and a questionnaire were implemented; these instruments were used in order to validate the phenomena studied. A piloting stage was conducted with a different group in order to assess the effectiveness of the instruments (see Figure 3). Additionally, the company and the population under study signed consent letters (see Appendices A-B) allowing the researcher to apply certain instruments and analyze the data. Confidentiality among other ethical issues was considered.



Figure 3. Piloting Stage

Firstly, a survey of six questions was conducted to validate the pertinence of this study for the participants. The survey was applied during the first semester of 2013. Strengths and weakness regarding English language skills were assessed by the participants. (see Appendix C)

Secondly, it was necessary to apply a second survey in order to analyze in detail the importance and the impact of vocabulary in speaking performance. The questionnaire had three concrete questions about the relationship between vocabulary and speaking. (see Appendix D)

3.4.2.2 *The while stage*

A corpus, a focus group and a reflective journal were the data collection instruments implemented. These instruments were implemented during the pedagogical intervention (see Table 1).

Table 1. Instruments' Implementation Sessions

| Implementation | Mode |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Corpus | Face-to-face |
| Focus group | Face-to-face and Online |
| Reflective journals | Online |

The implementation started with learners' design of corpus and agreements on the functionality and the number of words to be included. Then, there were some protocols of focus groups to raise awareness about the importance of vocabulary on speaking performance. Last, there was training on reflective journals for further implementation (see Appendix E). During the implementation, the researcher started to analyze data and use coding procedures to enrich the pedagogical intervention.

3.4.2.3 *The post stage*

After the data was collected, it was analyzed based on some repetitive insights. From the first questionnaire, the data showed that speaking was one of the main skills that learners wanted to improve. Additionally, from this questionnaire aspects like learners' beliefs about being successful, learning strategies and improvement plans were considered. Some other findings showed participants' needs for guidance to develop improvement plans and strategies in order to succeed in learning.

Since speaking was identified as the most important skill, the second instrument helped the researcher to validate the fact that students considered that the lack of vocabulary was affecting their speaking performance and all participants agreed that a good range of vocabulary would improve their speaking performance.

3.5 **Conclusion**

This chapter has explained the type of study applied to this research based on the context, participants, and the data collection instruments designed to understand learners' needs. The description of the piloting process and the ethical consideration were also described. All the data gathered and obtain during this preliminary stage was the foundation of the forthcoming pedagogical implementation.

Chapter 4: Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

4.1 Introduction

In this study two different approaches were considered for the pedagogical intervention. The first was the communicative approach and the second, the task-based approach. The research question (*How might a self-directed strategy such as reflective learning journals help A1/A2 learners' knowledge and use of vocabulary in speaking performance?*), determined that during the pedagogical intervention, learners were guided through a self-reflection process concerning vocabulary strategies and self-directed actions to foster their knowledge of vocabulary on speaking performance.

Firstly, communicative language teaching (CLT) focuses on learning language to communicate specific functions of language in different contexts. The CLT approach requires interactions between learners by facing contextualized and real business situations. The tasks proposed by this approach emphasize learner-centered activities. As Lavadenz (2011, p.22) argued, communicative competence underscores the importance of “discourse-connected thoughts” because it engages other competencies in order to promote production through sociolinguistic, discourse and linguistic competences. Sociolinguistic competences refer to formality, politeness, and turn taking. Discourse competence involves the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of oral words to express an idea. Finally, linguistic competence refers to the interaction of basic elements of language. The company where the study was developed has established the communicative approach within the English language curriculum as a strategy to improve communication among employees from different geographies, as well as their sociolinguistic, discourse and linguistic competences.

Secondly, the task-based approach (TBA, hereafter) focuses on tasks that are especially designed for learners in order to achieve communicative class objectives. TBA is a learner-centered approach that requires learners to use all their language and resources available rather than practicing a language structure. In TBA, language is personalized through the setting of natural contexts which are guided and monitored by the teacher. In this study, the language exploration tasks were chosen according to students' needs and also promoted learners' communication by making tasks enjoyable and motivating. The effectiveness of TBA relies on the design of real world tasks as the source of a pedagogical action. It is based on "activities which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process, was regarded as a 'task'" (Prabhu, 1987, p.45). Throughout the pedagogical intervention, learners were provided with some tasks including: reflective journals, corpus designed and focus groups among others that led to final products.

The Tata Consultancy Service English program is divided into elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels. Learners have two hours of face-to-face class and two hours of autonomous English learning on a company platform. The program has a maximum of 15 students per group and its main objective is to communicate in a second language effectively. They are very highly-motivated because the English classes are a benefit they have and being part of the lessons is not a requirement of the company.

4.2 Visions of language, learning, and curriculum

4.2.1 Vision of language

Speaking is one of the priority skills that learners want to achieve. When learners are competent to speak, they are seen by others as people who have mastered a language. At TCS

speaking is one of the main skills learners need to improve if they want to be promoted. Speaking is typically used in everyday interactions from simple phone calls to formal trainings. Learners are expected to have a successful performance in speaking if they want to have professional advancement and opportunities to be part of different teams around the world. This company's customers, who are from countries all over the globe, expect employees to interact through English as the main means of communication. Speaking requires the implementation of the appropriate reflective strategies that make learners aware of the importance of creating effective action plans by creating these learners are more likely to succeed in their speech; thus, reflective journals become a valuable source to identify weak and strong points of learners' speaking performance.

4.2.2 Vision of learning

As an information consulting firm whose main business is to provide technical support to global clients, TCS is not primarily concerned with language teaching. Despite this fact, TCS has become aware of the importance of carrying out an English program that truly answers their employees' needs. As the business is growing and most of the participants are adults, the company is committed to extend their vision of learning to empower learners in autonomy. There is no clearly defined approach. However, the learning vision encompasses a student-centered approach that promotes autonomous learning and communication in real settings.

4.2.3 Vision of curriculum

As previously stated, TCS is not an educational setting, even though TCS considers English as a vital part of their success in business. TCS has no given curriculum established for the English program. However, the company is aware of the need to train their employees to have a smooth information exchange and software support, mainly through email, tutorials,

minutes of meetings, reports, and other business actions. In this company, demonstrating English proficiency by giving accurate guidelines and support to different international customers – especially people from India– represents opportunities to obtain a job promotion. The participants were concerned about English language usage and wanted to be more effective in closing agreements with customers, designing the appropriate documentation, and supporting guidelines for new software applications.

Therefore, the current study is seen as an opportunity to influence the establishment of an English program customized to the target population's needs. The TCS English program contributes to their professional growth and extends the impact of their knowledge through time. The employees will have opportunities of supporting the IT business in other regions if they are able to use written English as a mean of business communication. This study contributed to enable the company to move towards the achievement of this objective.

4.3 Instructional design

The pedagogical intervention took place over 20 hours which were divided in six stages of approximately three and a half hours each. It was drafted as a preliminary action plan to be developed during the six stages (see Table 2).

Table 2. Preliminary Action Plan/ Pedagogical Intervention

| Stages | Second Semester |
|--------|--|
| 1 | Focus Group: Raise awareness about the use of reflective journals Agreements and design of a reflective journal. Training on reflective journals adaptations to be included |
| 2 | Focus group: Protocol about the importance of vocabulary on speaking performance. First Journal Entry |
| 3 | Focus Group: Raise awareness about the use of corpus as a strategy to improve speaking performance. Second Journal Entry |
| 4 | Design of a corpus with the contribution of learners. |
| 5 | Speaking tasks in context |
| 6 | Assessment of the speaking tasks |

4.3.1 Lesson planning

Each lesson was two hours in length regardless of whether the class session was online or face-to-face. The lessons were divided in the following stages: warm-up, setting classroom objectives, practice, reflection time and conclusions.

4.3.1.1 *Warm-up and setting classroom objectives*

The first stage was to introduce the context with an ice-breaker activity in which learners were requested to complete different kinds of tasks that required learners to move through the classroom, find clues, decode secret messages and organize elements. As soon as learners had finished the warm-up stage, the researcher asked learners to predict what the class was about and class objectives were set at this point.

4.3.1.2 *Practice*

The second stage was the presentation and practice of the task proposed for the lesson. All the tasks provided key elements which contributed to the final product of the week. For example, by means of a role-play, learners were able to put into practice what they had learned in

real speaking scenarios closer to them. During this stage, learners used a corpus to help them organize and connect their ideas before carrying out the task.

4.3.1.3 Reflection Time –Conclusions

During the third stage, learners were able to reflect about their performance in the task, the benefits of the corpus and their improvements in speaking, if any. They had to complete self-assessment and follow-up their work through either reflective journals or focus groups looking for areas to improve in further tasks. Learners also assessed the applied strategy's effectiveness and gave feedback to their peers' tasks.

The main objective of this research study is to examine how learner's knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance is influenced through the use of daily reflective learning journals. This chapter presents the action plan to address these two phenomena.

4.3.2 Implementation

In order to start the pedagogical intervention, it was necessary to design an action plan which included a chronological timeline, a description of the lesson plans, the design of the instruments, tools and materials used (see Figure 4).

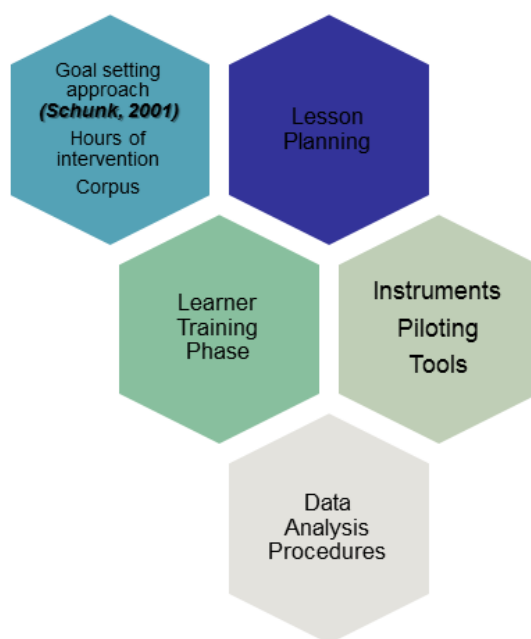


Figure 4. Pedagogical Implementation

For the implementation of this research, time allocated to carry out the research was the first element to be considered. The twenty-hour intervention took five weeks, which included both online and F2F sessions. Once the time was clearly established, the stage of content adaptation took place. The incorporation of very well defined pedagogical objectives through the goal setting approach, as well as the alignment of research objectives, enriched the lesson plans developed each week (see Appendix E). Shunk (2001, p.6) described three main characteristics for goal setting: specificity, in terms of setting a concrete performance; proximity, considering the length of time for short-term goals; and difficulty, in terms of knowledge of the skills learners have in order to achieve the class goals. Additionally, contents were selected based on the learners' needs.

During the phase of lesson plan design, the task based approach was used in order to set certain tasks during the lesson which had a final speaking performance at the end as evidence of

the learners' language improvement. All activities took place in speaking business tasks because the main goal of this research is to improve speaking performance in a specific context. In addition, certain research goals were identified to keep focused during the lesson plan design phase, in terms of which data the researcher was gathering throughout the week (see Appendix E). In this light, it was necessary to define and start the design of the three instruments implemented for this research: a teacher journal, a reflective journal and focus groups (see Appendices F-G-H-I). Firstly, field notes were taken in a teacher journal in order to enrich the perceptions and answers reported by learners (See Appendix O). As participant-observer, the researcher was able to analyze other factors of improvement in categories such as speaking, vocabulary, learners' strategies and self-assessment. Secondly, reflective journals were implemented in two different ways in order to be more appealing to learners as both a formal template to complete and as forums with guiding reflective questions; in this way learners' motivation was maintained. Thirdly, focus groups were carried out in order to obtain primary perceptions from learners about their improvements in vocabulary and also provide specific insights in terms of self-reflection strategies. In order to achieve this goal, a training phase was carried out at the beginning of the intervention to ensure learners were familiar with the instruments and the protocols established. Lastly, these instruments were piloted in classes taught by colleagues in the university and in the company.

Along with the reflective learning strategy during the pedagogical implementation, the researcher provided a corpus with key expressions for facing concrete contexts, such as how to handle a telephone call (See Appendix J) and how to give presentations. The main reason for including a corpus was to provide learners with enough input and resources in terms of vocabulary to perform their tasks. McCarten (2007) asserted that "corpus, however, cannot tell

us exactly what to teach or how to teach, and it has nothing to tell us with respect to how students learn the best” (p.45); a corpus is only a tool that can support learners’ language learning. By using the corpus, learners felt more comfortable with the tasks, were able to learn new vocabulary, and connected their ideas better during their speaking tasks. This research sought to address these personal goals and meet the learners needs.

Finally, an online community named Vocabulary on Speaking Performance was created within the corporative platform “Knome™” (See Appendix K). This was the place where learners had to upload their reflective journals (See Appendix P), answer forums and summarize their main insights about the focus groups. This community was established to follow the progress of the population under study.

4.3.2.1 Learners’ assumed knowledge

Learners were A1/A2 according to European Common Framework; they were not able to express themselves because of what they had identified as a lack of vocabulary. They had prior knowledge of technical aspects, but they were not capable of connecting sentences coherently in different situations they had to face in the company. With this in mind, the researcher found that the language gap was identified by learners and how they associated it to the lack of vocabulary. In this light, the researcher was able to propose strategies to solve the problem under study by including reflective journals and a corpus as a way to help learners improve their speaking performance.

4.3.2.2 Materials

During the pedagogical intervention, it was necessary to design materials to incorporate the new instruments into classroom practices and also to help learners have a clear picture of what they were requested to do. These materials included:

- a. PowerPoint presentations to raise awareness about the use and the effectiveness of reflective journals. (see Appendix L)
- b. hand-outs such as flash cards and charts to support learners' performance while doing the tasks proposed during the intervention. (see Appendix M)
- c. an online community to store the data gathered by learners.
- d. two corpora to reinforce the acquisition and use of new words in learners' speaking performance.
- e. audios to simulate real business contexts such as phone conversations and clients' presentations.

4.3.2.3 *Learners' needs*

The learners' main objective was to improve their communicative skills because they needed to talk every day with international customers, especially with people from India. Their linguistic needs were based on communicating well during telephone calls, in video conferences, in email, and in training sessions. At the company all employees have opportunities for advancement if they demonstrate English speaking proficiency. Their technical knowledge is required to solve issues around the world, but its effectiveness depends on the accurate use of the English language. These participants' responsibilities include closing business transactions, carrying out every day informal communications, and designing the appropriate documentation for new software applications. Each learnt lesson and the best practice in the English program is intended to contribute to their professional growth and extends the impact of their knowledge through time. Finally, employees will have opportunities to support the IT business in other global locations if they are able to use English as a means of business communication.

4.4 Conclusion

At the end of the process of the pedagogical intervention and implementation data was gathered based on the focus of this current study. The earlier consideration of the vision of language, learning and curriculum allowed the researcher to design a detailed action plan that address carefully learners' needs and support the research question guiding this work. During the next chapter the data management procedures and categories emerged from data were described.

Chapter 5: Results and Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the methods and procedures that were implemented during the data analysis stage, in which the main objective was to study how a self-reflection strategy might help A1/A2 learner's knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance, through the usage of reflective learning journals. In this chapter, the data analysis method and procedures are explained; then, data management and coding procedures (open, axial and selective coding) are presented. Subsequently, two categories and four subcategories are identified when the data is displayed and the analysis is conducted. Finally, the findings are presented regarding the guiding research question.

5.2 Data management procedures

During preliminary stages of analysis, the researcher recalled the context and the phenomena under study in order to ground concepts and understand participants' responses. After this was completed, the researcher began the process of analysis, based on the concept of Corbin and Strauss (2008), who stated that "analysis is a process of examining something in order to find out what it is and how it works" (p.46). In order to understand the data, the researcher divided it into components to identify properties and dimensions, which were easily defined and related at the end of the analysis. Indeed, these components became the main concepts or categories derived from the data collected.

These categories were grouped in high and low levels. Lower-level concepts needed to be very well defined because as Corbin and Strauss (2008) averred "the higher-level concepts will rest on a solid foundation of lower-level concepts, which in turn go directly to the data, bringing with them the details and the power of description" (p.52). Therefore, the definitions of lower-

level categories required researcher expertise in terms of being able to identify key elements from the data collected, in terms of the effectiveness of self-reflective journals as a self-directed strategy to improve learners' speaking performance.

Accordingly, the main reason for carrying out data analysis was to transform data into categories that generated an improved understanding of classroom practices and increases professional knowledge. Moreover, in-depth analysis was implemented because it provided new knowledge and deeper understanding of the facts moving beyond what was observable by the researcher alone. Indeed, two categories were identified: The first related to the importance of vocabulary in speaking performance; the second, to the effectiveness of reflective journals.

5.2.1 Validation

During the validation process all data gathered was triangulated in order to verify its validity and reliability; this data came from focus groups, the teacher's journal, and students' reflective journals. The triangulation process helped the researcher to avoid certain drawbacks in terms of misunderstanding nonverbal behaviors observed from the researcher's eye. During this process the researcher's perception of an event was not crucial. What was essential, however, was the information that participants were providing on each lesson. As a result, data was organized in a matrix, which allowed the researcher to have a better understanding and proceed with an in-depth analysis.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) defined validation as the process of verifying "interpretations with participants and against data as the research moves along" (p.48). Triangulation in this sense helps the researcher to ensure that his analysis of the data focuses on the data collected. In this project, the researcher validated data included in the teaching journals against the learners' response. At this stage, the researcher wanted to verify that the interpretations of learners'

behavior observed in class and written in the teachers' journal were coherent with what the learners concluded.

Triangulation is also, as Mc Millan and Schumacher (2010) defined, a “cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies, time periods and theoretical schemes” (p.379). Therefore, in order to find regularities among data, the researcher analyzed those patterns that were recurrent during the research. In this research, the triangulation took place when the researcher integrated the data collected from all the instruments looking for points where data was connected, and subsequently analyzed a selection of the repetitive patterns that emerged. Additionally, during the cross-data validation process, the main focus was the research question, in order to ensure the researcher was aligned and focused. Two main categories were identified due to their common similarities along the three instruments. The first related to the effectiveness of reflective journals as a self-directed strategy to foster speaking performance. The second focused on the implications of a corpus in the improvement of speaking performance. Consequently, the cross-data validation process was effective in order to verify the reliability of the data provided from the three different instruments.

5.2.2 Data analysis methodology

The process of data analysis was conducted through the grounded theory, which facilitated the process of coding by the definition of categories. One of the elements that contributed to analyzing data was the fact that lesson plans were designed not only by including pedagogical goals but also research goals. Corbin and Strauss (2008) claimed “the important thing to keep in mind when doing interviews and/or observations is the concepts driving the data collection and analysis” (p.30). Therefore, the research question was aligned with the lesson plans and research instruments in order to ensure the quality and accuracy of the data collected.

Charmaz (2005) argued that “grounded theory methods consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (p.4). Grounded theory helped the researcher to understand the data collected in terms of how reflective journals were an effective self-directed strategy to develop theoretical analysis from the beginning of the project to the end, as well as participants’ perceptions in terms of speaking improvements.

The analytical strategies for making sense of the data collected were techniques such as asking questions and making comparisons. Firstly, during the preliminary stages, strategies, including brainstorming and exploratory questions helped the researcher to understand participants’ responses. In this light, before carrying out a detailed microanalysis of the data collected, the researcher explored and generated possible ways to analyze the data. Corbin and Strauss (2008) claimed “asking questions and thinking about the range of possible answers helps us to take the role of the other so that we can better understand the problem from the participant’s perspective” (p.70). This brainstorming technique was useful to analyze their points of view. In fact, this facilitated the understanding of participants’ perceptions at preliminary stages about learning strategies, self-directed strategies and reflections about their own learning difficulties.

Sensitizing, theoretical, practical and other types of exploratory questions guided this process. Firstly, data was displayed in a matrix to be able to identify common patterns; subsequently, sensitizing questions arose regarding participants’ responses. Secondly, theoretical questions were asked in the sense of connections, process and variations with constructs. Each category and subcategory was analyzed based on the constructs of self-directed learning, vocabulary and self-reflection; one of the main questions considered was whether data was

aligned with the main constructs. Thirdly, practical questions were used to provide direction for theoretical sampling, and guiding questions were used during the design of focus groups and reflective journals (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.112). In this case several excerpts from the data collected were taken literally from each of the instruments according to their pertinence.

Finally, while analyzing the data, a comparison strategy was implemented. This is in line with Corbin and Strauss' (2008) assertion that comparison "is essential to all analysis because it allows the researcher to differentiate one category theme from another and to identify properties and dimensions specific to that category/theme" (p.73). While carrying out this research, comparison was used to point out main aspects of the information gathered with techniques such as waving the red flag and color coding. In this process of comparison, these coding techniques allowed the researcher to flag important information within the data, and then color coding was used to relate similar responses. In fact, once data was organized and identified, it was easier to attach labels and categorize segments of data as a result of this process of comparisons. Corbin and Strauss (2008, p.35) defined coding as the verbs and codes given to the concepts emerged from data; indeed, two categories emerged from data that support this research question in terms of self-directed learning and speaking improvement.

5.3 Categories

5.3.1 Introduction

A matrix was designed to analyze the information collected from reflective journals, teaching notes and focus groups and to look for patterns, connections and points in common between categories which would contribute to answering the question of the phenomena under study (see Appendix N). McMillan and Schumacher (2010, p.25) highlighted the importance of

organizing data into workable units, in order to avoid feeling overwhelmed by the amount of data gathered.

Additionally, the main objective of this process is to search for similarities and differences in the data that allow the researcher to identify several possible answers for his research question. Miles and Huberman (1994) defined data reduction as “a form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified” (p. 11). Once data was organized by instrument, its analysis was easier and the identification of common findings and their further categorization helped to answer the research question.

5.3.1.1 Category mapping

During this analysis three stages of coding took place: open, axial and selective coding.

Open coding took place when all data collected from the three research instruments during different stages of the pedagogical intervention was recorded in a matrix and code. In this phase, the researcher identified and categorized the data according to the phenomena under study in different codes (see Figure 5). There were different codes identified regarding participants' responses; the most predominant were the lack of self-directed strategies, the importance of vocabulary in speaking performance, and the benefits of reflective journals (see Figure 6).

Pedagogical Intervention



Reflective Journal 01

| Date | |
|--|--|
| Activity Description | We perform an activity in which we could practice the vocabulary to have a phone conversation. |
| Questions | Comments |
| Did I learn anything from it so, What did I learn? | Yes, I did. I learned key phrases to have a phone conversation. |
| How did I feel doing this activity? | I liked the activity, but as usual, I get very nervous speaking English, I understand what they say but I find it hard to speak the language for fear of a mispronunciation. |
| Was this activity useful for me? Why? | It's very useful, not only for my work but also for my study. Today it's essential to be able to at least have this type of phone conversations. |
| What will I do differently? | Don't use so many buzzwords. I think a lot before I talk. |
| Did I need extra vocabulary during the lesson? If so, when? | I use extra phrases in practice with my classmates to complement the activity. |
| What type of vocabulary do I need to learn? | I need to learn different vocabulary to establish a business conversation |
| Were the expressions of the corpus useful to do the task? If so, how many words did I use from it? | So much useful. I use a 60% the expressions. It is easier for me when I have a set of words to help me during the task. |
| Was this activity useful to improve my speaking? Why? | Of course, it was very useful. These activities help me improve my pronunciation, increase my vocabulary and especially, lose the fear of speaking English. |
| Extra Notes | Although I get so nervous I really like this type of activity where mainly are conversations, as we improve pronunciation and increase vocabulary. |

Figure 5. Screenshot from TM Knome Platform. Reflective Journal

| A | B | C | D | E |
|--|--|--|---|---|
| Mundo.es | Translates or dictionary. | Application in the telephone, ask another person. | Online Translators, word reference. | Google traslator. In my smartphone. |
| Vocabulary is important in speaking | Vocabulary is very important for any speaking. | Vocabulary is important enable good communication. | I think the vocabulary is extremely important. | Vocabulary is very important in everyday life. |
| I do not have any plans I believe necessarily to have the plan because I need to | I do not have any plan. | I do not have any plan to increase vocabulary. Write and listen of the word daily. | My plans is take the course that give us TCS, I want to travel. | My plan for increase the vocabulary is memorize and practice at least two words per |

Figure 6. Color Coding Procedures

Axial coding was the process of placing the preliminary codes that emerged from the open coding into categories that related to self-directed learning, vocabulary and reflective journals (see Figure7). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) defined categories as “entities comprised of grouped codes” (p.376); in this process the researcher looked for similarities in the codes and grouped those into final categories that helped the researcher interpret the data from a clearer perspective. As there were common patterns identified during open coding, it was necessary to consolidate them into solid categories, and look for evidence that support the understanding of participants’ responses regarding their speaking performance.

| Concepts | Preliminary Categories |
|---|--|
| Translators are the most common tool they use. | Ineffective Strategies Lack of accuracy on setting strategies |
| Vocabulary is important for them in order to improve Speaking. | Vocabulary is a speaking constrain. |
| Most of them claim the fact of not having a plan or a strategy set to improve vocabulary. | Lack of a specific strategy to improve vocabulary. Self-directed learning |
| Learners would like to learn vocabulary through pictures, movies and music. Additionally, they want to understand the words according to the context. | Self-reflection strategies are not consider. |

Figure 7. Preliminary Categories Sample

5.3.1.2 Identification of core category

During the selective coding stage, the categories from the axial coding were integrated into a core category which provides responses to the question of the ongoing research. In this study, the core category demonstrated that a self-directed strategy like reflective journals enhances learners’ speaking performance by the improvement of vocabulary knowledge. The core category was selected based on the frequency of occurrence and its relationship to the other categories in the matrix (Creswell, 2013, p.79). This core category included all data that came from the analysis of the major categories and their corresponding indicators or subcategories.

As a result of coding and triangulation two main categories were identified. The categories and subcategories that emerged from the data collected were displayed (see Table 3).

Table 3. Categories and subcategories

| General question | <i>How might a self-directed strategy such as reflective learning journals help A1/A2 learners' knowledge and use of vocabulary in speaking performance?</i> |
|--|---|
| Categories | Subcategories |
| Learner's speaking performance improves through learner's knowledge of vocabulary. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corpuses are tools to improve speaking performance. |
| Reflective journals are an effective self-directed strategy for learners' improvement in speaking performance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reflective journals foster learner's reflection. - Self-directed learning is enhanced through self-reflection. |

5.3.2 Analysis of categories

5.3.2.1 Description of categories

The first category was *learner's speaking performance improves through learner's knowledge of vocabulary* and it has one subcategory. This subcategory related to how *corpuses are tools to improve speaking performance*; this explained the success of incorporating corpus as a research support tool to improve learners' knowledge of vocabulary, and it also concerned the learners' perception of improvement due to the increasing of their vocabulary range.

The second category identified was *reflective journals are an effective self-directed strategy for learning*; indeed, this category is divided into two subcategories. The first, *reflective journals foster learner's reflection*, is related to the effectiveness of reflective journals to promote self-reflection in learners' production. The second subcategory, *self-directed learning is enhanced through self-reflection*, demonstrated the contributions of reflection to promote

autonomous learning by empowering learners with individual strategies to assess and improve their own performance.

The following paragraphs provide more details regarding the two categories and include selected samples of the data and its analysis.

Category 1: Learners' speaking performance improves through learners' knowledge of vocabulary.

The participants reported improvement in their speaking as their knowledge of vocabulary increased after using the planned strategies. Nation (1997) averred, "Vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, knowledge of the world enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on" (p.3). Learners were able to use the vocabulary because this was set in a specific context and with well-defined language. They stated they had enough words to express themselves and create clear statements.

(Excerpt No. 1 Reflective Journal Entry 1- Learner E)

The activities of the class help me to improve my speaking because I have the vocabulary I need to create the sentences and connect the verbs. I feel more security when I talk so speaking it is more fluency. If I forget a word I go through the list of expressions and then I remembered.

As the excerpt indicates, learners were able to improve their speaking because the vocabulary provided as an input helped them to carry out the tasks.

The subcategory was *corpuses are tools to improve speaking performance*. In the analysis of the data learners reported their feeling of improvement through the use of corpus. The following excerpts exemplify learners' responses and teacher field notes:

(Excerpt No. 2 Reflective Journal Entry 1- Learner C)

I need vocabulary every day because I need learn but the corpus is useful because give me the words I need to speak so I feel security of the sentences and grammar structures and I speak more because the security of the list. I can also use different expressions and not need to use the same words.

(Excerpt No. 3 Teacher Journal)

Learners find the corpus complete to perform the task and provide enough words to interact. They are engaged in the activity and tailor the number of times they use each expression.

As is shown, learners recognized the importance of vocabulary for their daily lives, and of corpus for their workplace conversation, while avoiding the repetition of words and expressions. Hiebert and Kamil (2005) claimed that “words are not just tokens that one might memorize to impress others. Instead, the words that make up one's vocabulary are part of an integrated network of knowledge” (p.106). As a consequence, learners were able to identify not only a word but also the network of knowledge that surrounded it. The inclusion of a corpus was mainly as a research support tool to validate learners’ improvement in speaking by giving them key business expressions to use in telephone conversations and formal presentations. As learners began to incorporate this corpus with in their speaking tasks in class, the teacher included in the field notes how learners reported that their speaking skill was improved because they had the words to elaborate more coherent statements. Additionally, most of the words listed in the corpus were used repeatedly while the students were speaking and interacting with others.

(Excerpt No. 4 Teacher Journal)

Learners today have to role play a phone call conversation. They use the corpus as a reference list to create a coherent conversation. Learners ask fewer questions and they work on the list highlighting the words they use the most.

Furthermore, it can be argued that speaking improves through learner's knowledge of vocabulary. As class tasks were carried out, learners reported improvements in their speaking competence due to an increase in their vocabulary range. They were learning new, meaningful words in each lesson, and they needed to put them into practice in different speaking tasks. The participants associated the enhancement of their speaking skills to their vocabulary knowledge.

The following excerpts present some of the learners' beliefs regarding this category.

(Excerpt No. 4 Reflective Journal Entry 1- Learner B)

The corpus very useful and guided us of these words and expressions to make the conversation. If I know the words can speak more and more words give me more forms to communicate my ideas in the different activities of the class.

(Excerpt No. 5 Reflective Journal Entry 1- Learner F)

I think if I know more vocabulary my speaking improve the corpus help me to use the expression to communicate to others a clear message my speaking improve because I have more words to express and if I need to complement anything I use the words.

(Excerpt No. 6 Teacher Journal)

All learners expressed to find useful the corpus and use almost all the words from it. They use the corpus as a guided.

The implementation of the corpus with context-based vocabulary or expressions for specific settings allowed learners to have an improved understanding of the words they heard and

needed to use in certain context. The corpus was only one vocabulary learning strategy that sought the improvement of learners' speaking performance. As data revealed, learners had a variety of expressions to communicate, and then, they were able to improve the quality of their statements with the correct incorporation of specific framing expressions.

Category 2: Reflective Journals are an effective self-directed strategy for learning.

In self-directed learning (SDL), reflection occurs in different ways and is considered one of the resources of learning; in this study, however, the focus is no more than reflective journals. Du (1995) asserted “reflective learning journals and study plans are tools to engage learners in SDL because they promote critical thinking, make sense of learning, and the design of learning plans” (p.86). At the end of this study, reflective journals were identified by the participants as tools to reflect upon their own performance critically and address strategies to help them to improve their weak areas. However, the participants changed their view of reflection because at the beginning of this study reflection was not even recognized by participants as a strategy for learning as the following excerpts shows:

(Excerpt No. 7 Reflective Journal Entry 2- Learner I)

No I do not reflect only do homeworks, activities and quizzes. I think the teacher is responsible of think what I learn and if I study all I learn.

The first subcategory is *reflective journals foster learner's reflection*. At the beginning of the research learners referred to ineffective strategies to improve their speaking skills; actually, they reported that they never reflected on their performance at the class. As a consequence of this, learners failed to have a strategy to tackle the difficulties they present in speaking performance.

(Excerpt No. 8 Focus Group 1- Learner C)

I do not have any plan to increase vocabulary. Write and listen of the word daily.

All learners usually attend their classes to carry out their tasks and assignments, expecting the classes to include all the information they need to achieve their learning objectives. When the participants became familiar with the strategy of reflective journals, they were aware of the responsibility they had for their own learning. As Smith (1999) claimed, when learners keep records of their learning process, they might be able to monitor their practice:

The act of writing something down often crystallizes a particular problem or issue or enables me to see where a particular piece of work has not achieved its objective; through this process I can identify my strengths and weakness, and areas in which I could benefit from further training (p.10).

After focus groups were conducted highlighting the benefits of reflection in self-directed learning, learners became aware of the benefits and were very devoted to filling out their reflective journal entries identifying aspects to improve, learn, and practice. They created their own action plans to overcome the weaknesses that they identified:

(Excerpt No. 9 Reflective Journal Entry 2- Learner B)

Reflection is the identification of good and bad points in my classwork.

(Excerpt No. 10 Reflective Journal Entry 2- Learner E)

I reflect on how did my activities in class and what aspects can I improve. I lost fear to speak because on what I reflect in previous sections make me feel better. I think on activities to improve the next class.

(Excerpt No. 11 Reflective Journal Entry 2- Learner F)

Reflection is a different way of learning because I alone can think on a plan to improve anything I did not do right. Reflective journals help me to choose activities to improve my speaking and analyze if my activities are ok o not.

The second subcategory is *self-directed learning is enhanced through self-reflection*. The participants reported that being reflective about their processes allowed them to set their own learning objectives and search for strategies that would help them to improve. During the pedagogical intervention, learners were more active, sharing and giving suggestions to their peers' work in order to enrich each other's learning experience. Hiemstra (1994) argued that "learners can become empowered to take increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor" (p.6), while at the same time they are able to reflect on how their performance was during specific tasks. Thus, reflection is one of the key aspects to foster self-directed learning.

In Excerpt No. 12, the learner expressed that he was able to self-direct his work as if he were the teacher by evaluating and searching for resources that can help him to improve. In fact, when learners became self-directed, they started the process of self-reflection about their work following Candy's four-dimensional model (1991:p.60) personal autonomy, capacity to conduct one's education, learner-control and autodidaxy.

(Excerpt No. 12 Focus Group 2- Learner D)

I feel like the teacher when I reflect on the class because I can evaluate my work in class and take decisions and plan activities to improve. I think now I can study alone and work with my classmates in ideas to look for materials on internet that help me.

In Excerpt 13, the learner analyzed his method of arranging his ideas, and he mentioned several of the tools he was using, looking for improvement opportunities that demonstrated control over their learning somehow.

(Excerpt No. 13 Focus Group 2- Learner H)

I like to reflect because I can think on my property ideas of how to improve. I can look on the web, do graphics to help me study and also I like to share with my friends about the ideas they try and my ideas and look for more learning english.

5.3.2.2 Core category

Recalling the research question of *how might a self-directed strategy help A1/A2 learner's knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance through the usage of reflective learning journals*, the researcher affirmed that self-directed strategies like reflective journals enhance learners' speaking performance which demonstrates the effectiveness of the strategies established in the lessons to improve their knowledge of vocabulary. In fact, the two categories that emerged from data regarding learners' vocabulary knowledge and the effectiveness of reflective journals as a self-directed strategy support the answer to the research question in terms of learner's speaking performance improvements.

Firstly, learners improved their speaking because they had the necessary vocabulary during each lesson to express their ideas. Furthermore, the corpus was the support tool of the research which allowed learners to have several expressions on hand to use in certain contexts. Learners reported that they were able to communicate effectively in their conversations as their vocabulary knowledge and self-confidence increased while participating in class.

Secondly, reflective journals guided participants into self-directed learning by encouraging them to reflect upon their own performance. Reflective journals have been

recognized as one of the most useful tools that allow learners to reflect about their performance. At the same time, they are useful to guide learners into self-directed learning. In fact, through reflective journals, learners were able to assess their own work, looking for more efficient strategies that would allow them to learn easily and according to their needs. In this research self-directed learning was enhanced through learners' self-reflection in each of their journals entries.

After data was analyzed, the researcher concluded that self-directed strategies help A1/A2 learners' knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance. Learners' speaking performance appeared to be enhanced by their reflections in their journals about their own learning. Through these journals, learners were able to identify areas of improvement and set specific strategies to address their main issues. Finally, as learners set more effective strategies to address their weaknesses, they were able to improve their knowledge of vocabulary supported by the expressions listed on a corpus during the speaking tasks.

5.4 Conclusion

To conclude, this research finally demonstrated that reflective journals are effective self-directed strategies that empower learners to track their learning process. Additionally, it can also be claimed that learners' knowledge of vocabulary produced meaningful changes in learners' speaking performance.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions, pedagogical implications, limitations and further research as a result of the analysis of the data gathered for this research project. The research objective was to identify how a self-directed strategy might help A1/A2 learner's knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance through the usage of reflective learning journals.

6.2 Comparison of results with previous studies' results

The purpose of this study was to enhance students' speaking performance through the use of reflective learning journals as a self-directed strategy in order to improve learner's knowledge of vocabulary. One of the issues identified by participants at the beginning of this study was their inability to speak because of their limited vocabulary. As Wilkins (1972), and subsequently, many others scholars, have highlighted the importance of vocabulary as one of the foundations of language; consequently, vocabulary knowledge has an important role for learners who want to master a language.

This study aimed to transform the way vocabulary has been taught in my classroom and it also attempted to go beyond the confines of its walls. This study expected to impact the educational community at the local, national and international levels. Firstly, at the local level, it is expected that the company where this study was conducted will consider the findings and generate changes in the English program, by making learners' needs the real center of the classes and autonomy one of the new components. Secondly, at the national level, it is expected that the findings of this research will provide the Ministry of Education enough evidence to revise their policies and plans to empower learners to become self-directed. Thirdly, this research and its conclusions could serve as an invitation to certain members of the international ELT community

to reflect more upon the benefits of including vocabulary as a vital part of their curriculum and teaching approaches.

This research identified two main conclusions regarding learners' improvement in speaking performance that were also aligned with the main constructs guiding this research: (1) learners' speaking performance is likely to improve through learner's knowledge of vocabulary, and (2) reflective journals are a potentially effective self-directed strategy for learner's improvement in speaking performance.

Firstly, this research demonstrated that learners' speaking performance was improved because of their knowledge of vocabulary. At the beginning of this research, learners identified their lack of vocabulary as one of the limitations to improving their speaking skills; therefore, a corpus was designed as a research tool in order to foster learners' speaking performance. In the corpus, learners listed a section of the most important expressions, grouped according to specific business situations that they might have to face. Learners found the corpus to be a useful tool to improve their speaking skill because they felt it provided them with the necessary expressions to speak successfully in a contextualized business situation. Nowadays, teachers have to face classrooms where learners need to speak but they are not able to do so. However, the implementation of a corpus to enhance learners' speaking performance will be useful for them. The study reveals that participants recognized the importance of having a list of the most common expressions as a reference, and they referred to it to support their oral tasks. In fact, the words that were provided to learners in the corpus helped them to identify key vocabulary beforehand. In this way, learners became fully aware of the vocabulary they needed to use in each context making them feel more confident. The corpus not only listed meaningful

expressions to use, it also enriched learners' vocabulary knowledge by giving learners different options to express an idea.

Secondly, reflective journals proved to be an effective self-directed strategy for learners' improvement in speaking performance in this research study. Learners used journals as a way to identify and track their achievements, seeking strategies that allowed them to improve their performance effectively. Additionally, self-directed learning was enhanced through self-reflection. As learners got used to reflecting, they were more able to direct their own learning. At the beginning of the study, participants did not consider reflection as a strategy for learning; in fact, they found it difficult to sit down with their journals and identify areas of improvement. Therefore, when learners were asked about the kind of learning strategies they used, their answers were a list of activities without a clear learning objective. Notably, none of the responses included reflection as one of these strategies. However, as time passed, learners became aware of the importance of having journals as an instrument to follow up their process by identifying their weak and strong points. At the end of the research, learners had become accustomed to the dynamics of reflecting as they started to become aware of journal benefits.

Additionally, another important finding demonstrated that participants were able to track their own speaking improvements in a more systematic way. Indeed, they were able to design realistic action plans that allowed them to reflect upon the use of corpus to enrich their vocabulary. Reflective journal entries were written at the end of each lesson, and learners needed to focus on their own performance. Reflecting on their task was not something they were accustomed to doing, nor was looking for strategies or resources that allowed them to improve their performance. As a result of this reflection process, it can be argued that reflective journals

may be used by any teacher whose aim is to empower learners to become more autonomous and to track learning processes.

Lastly, at the beginning of the study learners were unwilling to believe that they could make changes, share ideas, look for resources or make decisions about their own learning. These participants were raised with traditional methods of teacher-centered classes. In terms of learning, they believed that the teacher was responsible for leading the class, giving feedback, assessing performance, and suggesting resources. One of several challenges for the present researcher was to attempt to break these paradigms on learning and to guide the participants toward autonomy. Once they were able to see the benefits of self-directed learning and have the support to reflect upon their learning, they were empowered to lead their own work. At the end, participants were in charge of assessing their work; in addition, they were able to suggest ideas to their peers about how to improve their speaking skills throughout vocabulary knowledge. In fact, learners asked few questions to the teacher and looked for support from their peers or the resources they might have.

6.3 Significance of the results

The pedagogical implications of this research suggest that vocabulary needs to be incorporated into language teaching as an integral part of our lessons. Teachers cannot assume that learners will look for the vocabulary and the expressions independently without relating vocabulary in the lessons with real language functions. Lessons must be contextualized according to learners' needs with a corpus which lists several of the key vocabulary items which learners will need to develop their task. YongqiGu (2003) argued that learning new words through context is only one step students may use, and that students should think metacognitively and learn new words within the context of which they appear. In fact, providing

learners with enough vocabulary through a corpus is no more than an input for learners in order to allow them to use the language effectively and use high order thinking skills.

Additionally, teachers can use reflective journals to promote self-direction in learners. These journals allow learners to reflect about their own performance and look for further improvement. Moreover, one of the benefits of reflective journals is that they can be used in other contexts and for different kind of subjects. Reflective journals can be implemented by teachers who want to empower learners to direct their own work and when they have students in their classes who like to depend on somebody else to direct their learning. Indeed, reflective journals may prove a positive means of providing a first taste towards the development of self-directed learning actions; teachers can guide learners by sensitizing them towards the benefits of reflection and by supporting students' process with tools such as preliminary templates that might guide them towards the development of a personal method of reflecting about their learning process. As time passes, learners should be able to redefine their reflective journals, and they will also incorporate new elements that enrich their reflection in their process of learning.

Furthermore, learners may be able to start exercising self-directed actions learning by the identification of Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Time-bound objectives (Heriot-Watt, 2008) and effective action plans to address their language needs (see Appendix P). Therefore, given these incentives, learners may prove more likely to take the initiative to lead and organize their process by exploring different strategies, sharing with others and becoming aware of the benefits of being their own leaders for learning. It is important to clarify that even though this process starts as an unconscious process, in the end learners might be fully aware that they are guiding and decision-making for their own learning by themselves.

This project may help teachers, as well as learners, to become aware of the importance of vocabulary in English teaching and the learners' responsibility of being able to direct their learning. In fact, this research project could be carried out in different contexts with the variable of adapting the language and corpus according to learners' needs. Both teachers and learners can take advantage of this research and transfer it to other areas of study. Reflective journals provide the flexibility to be adapted to any content and with different learning purposes. As a result, this might confirm the transferability of this study to other contexts giving validity to the fact that reflective journals are an effective self-directed strategy to address learners' knowledge of any subject.

In a broader perspective, this study can be applied to studies based on English for specific purposes including teaching business English, allowing learners to face real language situations. It might well be interesting to explore the effects of learners' vocabulary knowledge in order to be able to have effective communication and raise learners' self-confidence. Interestingly, one of the findings was that participants expressed that their self-confidence improved while speaking because their vocabulary knowledge increased.

6.4 Limitations of the present study

The limitations that were faced while carrying out this research were related to time-constraints, the number of participants, and the target institution's curriculum.

Firstly, as the participants of this research were employees in a company, they had a number of responsibilities, which included attending meetings, visiting clients, and traveling at short notice. As a result, several classes were postponed to accommodate the company's priorities, and this had an impact on the pedagogical intervention. The twenty hours of pedagogical intervention were originally planned during a four-week period, but actually took

six weeks. Occasionally, certain participants were unaware of exactly what they were doing, and it took some time to contextualize and connect them again with the class dynamics.

The second limitation was the number of participants. As explained above, learners had to comply with different working responsibilities in addition to class requirements; therefore, it was necessary to reduce the number of participants. At the beginning, data was collected from the group as a whole (thirteen learners), but by the end of the intervention only nine participants were involved. Because of constant staff turnovers, attrition, and business demands, the researcher considered the data from only eight participants.

Lastly, another limitation was the target institution's curriculum itself, since it was very tight and strict. The English program failed to consider learners to be the center of the process; additionally, there was a lack of resources to help learners improve their language skills. However, a number of these drawbacks were overcome, and it was possible to make certain adjustments in the scope of the program by highlighting the importance of creating a curriculum according to learners' needs and with enough resources to allow learners to direct their own work. As a result, learning objectives were reviewed in terms of learners' needs and self-directed strategies were included in the program.

6.5 Further research

In this research project, the main objective was to examine how learners' knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance might be influenced through the use of daily reflective learning journals. Even though this research resulted in positive findings, there are still a number of areas to be investigated. An example of this is the need to continue examining the effects of vocabulary knowledge in learners' English performance in other skills, including reading, writing and listening.

For instance, further research is suggested in the field of English reading comprehension, to examine in what extent the knowledge of vocabulary might affect learners' reading skills. Different self-directed strategies can be implemented to support this research and validate the effect that vocabulary has on learners' knowledge of the English language. Indeed, research on how to acquire new vocabulary through reading or writing strategies would be enriching. Given this perspective, while learners learn how to use strategies like skimming or scanning, they may be able to identify new words and infer their meaning by context. The advantage of this is that it may also be applied to the teaching of science, for example, in order to improve learners' knowledge of specific vocabulary. Moreover, an interdisciplinary corpus that is designed collaboratively with the expressions learners need the most can be included as reference to support learners learning and interaction.

6.6 Conclusion

As a general conclusion, these findings support the hypothesis that writing in reflective journals helps learners to improve their speaking performance. The data collected and the results that emerged from its analysis affirm that the main objective of this study was therefore achieved. Bearing in mind that the main objective of this research was to examine how learner's knowledge of vocabulary in speaking performance is influenced through the use of daily reflective learning journals, it can be argued that the strategy of reflection was an effective means to empower learners to lead their own learning.

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Appendix B: Consent Letter Signed by Students

Tata Consultancy Services TCS
Formate de Autorización –Estudiantes

Bogotá, D.C. 13 de marzo de 2013

Señores:
Estudiantes nivel básico
Programa de Inglés TCS
Ciudad

Asunto: Carta de consentimiento informado

Estimado candidato:

Yo Adriana Solano Vanegas soy una estudiante de la Universidad de la Sabana en el programa de Maestría en Didáctica del Inglés con énfasis en Ambientes de Aprendizaje Autónomo y estoy llevando a cabo un proyecto de investigación como parte de un seminario llamado "Acción Research". Cabe anotar que dicha investigación hace parte de mi trabajo de grado.

El objetivo de este estudio es examinar las dificultades que presentan los estudiantes que están aprendiendo inglés como una segunda lengua al intentar mejorar su habilidad comunicativa, a través de diarios reflexivos de aprendizaje en el aula. Para este estudio estamos interesados en sus percepciones acerca de su proceso aprendizaje de inglés como segundo idioma.

Por lo anterior, comedidamente solicito su consentimiento y colaboración como participante de mi propuesta de investigación, que se realizará durante el primer y segundo semestre académico del presente año. Esto implica recolectar datos y analizar los resultados, con el fin de conocer y examinar cada uno de sus valiosos aportes.

A los participantes se les garantiza estricta confidencialidad con la información que se obtenga y este proyecto no tendrá incidencia alguna en las notas correspondientes al curso y/o a nivel laboral. Como constancia que conocen esta información y la aprueban, por favor firmar el presente consentimiento.

Yo comprendo que mi participación es voluntaria y que yo puedo retirar mi consentimiento y detener mi participación en el proyecto en cualquier momento.

Por este medio doy mi consentimiento de ser el objeto de su investigación.

Firma del estudiante _____

Appendix C: Survey

A

Survey
English Elementary Class
Tata Consultancy Services

TCSer name:

Dear student:

The purpose of this survey is to determine your beliefs regarding your language learning process. Please answer the following questions based on your English learning experience you may mark more than one.

This will help us to improve your English Classes you will need only 10 minutes.

1. Which is the main skill you want to improve throughout English Classes?

Listening ----- Writing ----- Speaking Reading ----- Other -----

Which? -----

2. Do you think you are able to improve that English skill?

Yes No -----

Why? -----

3. How do you plan to improve that English skill?

Un Plan de Mejoramiento de su lección una hora con acompañamiento.

4. Which do you consider are your strengths in English learning?

Listening ----- Writing ----- Speaking ----- Reading Other -----

Which? -----

5. Which do you consider are your weakness in English learning?

Listening ----- Speaking Writing ----- Reading ----- Other -----

Which? -----

6. What do you do to learn English?

Escuchando música y comparando letras.

Thanks for your Responses,

Appendix D: Survey

Survey
English Elementary Class
Tata Consultancy Services

TCSer name:

Dear student:

The purpose of this survey is to determine your beliefs regarding your language learning process. Please answer the following questions based on your English learning experience. You may mark more than one.

This will help us to improve your English Classes; you will need less than 10 minutes. The information gathered will be used confidentially

1. Do you think speaking is very important at TCS?

a) Yes
 b) No

2. Do you consider vocabulary influence your speaking performance?


a) All the times 100%
 b) Most of the times (From 85% to 95%)
 c) Sometimes (From 65% to 75%)
 d) Never 0%

3. Do you consider that a good range of vocabulary will help you to improve your speaking performance?

a) Strongly Agree
 b) Somewhat Agree
 c) Somewhat Disagree
 d) Strongly Disagree

Thanks for your responses,

Appendix E: Lesson Plan

|  | | WEEKLY PLANNER YEAR 2013 | | | | 2ND SEM Page 1 | |
|---|--|---|---|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------|--|
| Month: | September | Level: | Elementary | Introductory week | Teacher: | Adriana Solano Vanegas | |
| Hours of Intervention: | 20 Hours | Lesson Plans: | 5 (4 HOURS 2 ONLINE/2 FACE TO FACE) | | | | |
| PHASE | PURPOSE | | | | Data Collection Instrument | | |
| Learner training | Training strategies Sensitizing | | | | Focus Group Reflective Language Journal Teacher Journal | | |
| Implementation | <u>Research Objective</u> | <u>Pedagoogical Objective</u> | <u>Activities</u> | | Focus Group Reflective Language Journal Teacher Journal | | |
| | Identify and train learners in the use of the Data collection Instruments. | Students will be able to identify the benefits of Language Learning Reflective Journals and explore their perceptions about the importance of vocabulary on speaking performance. | <u>F2F: Focus Group</u> to explore learners beliefs regarding vocabulary. Training on the use of Reflective Language Journal. <u>ONLINE: First Journal Entry</u> about the importance of vocabulary on speaking | | | | |
| | List the expressions they use from the corpus and reflect about its effectiveness on speaking performance. | Students will be able to role play a phone conversation using some language expressions throughout a corpus related to telephone vocabulary. | <u>F2F</u> : Role play a phone conversation using some language expressions throughout a corpus related to telephone vocabulary. <u>ONLINE:</u> Prezi PPT and record of an interview video in simple past. <u>Second Journal</u> | | | | |

Appendix F: Research Instruments – Reflective Journal

INSTRUMENT 1

Pedagogical Intervention



Reflective Journal -----

| | |
|--|-----------------|
| Date | |
| Activity Description | |
| Questions | Comments |
| Did I learn anything? If so, What did I learn? | |
| How did I feel doing this activity? | |
| Was this activity useful for me? Why? | |
| What will I do differently? | |
| Did I need extra vocabulary during the lesson? If so, when? | |
| What type of vocabulary do I need to learn? | |
| Were the expressions of the corpus useful to do the task? If so, how many words did I use from it? | |
| Was this activity useful to improve my speaking? Why? | |
| Extra Notes | |

Appendix G: Research Instruments – Focus Group

INSTRUMENT 2]

Pedagogical Intervention



Focus Group Protocol 1

Teacher Moderator

FOCUS GROUP INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Thanks for agreeing to be part of the focus group. We appreciate your willingness to participate.

PURPOSE OF FOCUS GROUP S

- We have been asked by TCS English Program to conduct the focus groups.
- The reason we are having these focus groups is to find out your perceptions about the importance of vocabulary on speaking performance.
- We need your input and want you to share your honest and open thoughts with us.

GROUND RULE S

- 1. WE WANT YOU TO DO THE TALKING.**
We would like everyone to participate.
I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while.
- 2. THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS**
Every person's experiences and opinions are important.
Speak up whether you agree or disagree.
We want to hear a wide range of opinions.
- 3. WHAT IS SAID IN THIS ROOM STAYS HERE**
We want folks to feel comfortable sharing when sensitive issues come up.
- 4. WE WILL BE TAPED RECORDING THE GROUP**
We want to capture everything you have to say.
We don't identify anyone by name in our report. You will remain

Appendix H: Research Instruments – Focus Group Guiding Questions**Focus Group 1 Guiding Questions****Engagement questions:**

1. Why do you want to learn English?
2. What do you normally do when you do not know a word in English? Do you use any kind of sources? If so, Can you name some of them?

Exploration Questions:

3. Do you consider vocabulary is important for your speaking? Why?
4. Do you think vocabulary needs to be taught in the classroom? Why?
5. Do you have any plans to increase your vocabulary?
6. How would you like to learn new vocabulary? Why?

Exit question:

7. Is there anything else you would like to add about what we have discussed?

Adapted from:

http://assessment.aas.duke.edu/documents/How_to_Conduct_a_Focus_Group.pdf

Retrieved on 15th September, 2013.

Appendix I: Research Instruments – Teacher Journal

[NSTRUMENT 3

Pedagogical Intervention



Teacher Journal

I designed a space on my [PBworks](http://adriansolano.pbworks.com/w/page/69028320/Teacher%20Journal#comment11379268783) to record all my teacher journals for my ongoing action research. I will follow up my students' progress on speaking performance while conducting my pedagogical intervention. To access please click on the following link:

<http://adriansolano.pbworks.com/w/page/69028320/Teacher%20Journal#comment11379268783>

Teacher Journal -----

| Date | |
|--|----------|
| Activity Description | |
| What did I observe in terms of... | Comments |
| <u>Speaking performance</u> Did my learners have any kind of improvement? | |
| <u>Vocabulary</u> Did my learners use the vocabulary taught? Did they use any word from the corpus? | |
| <u>Learners' Strategies</u> Did my learners use any kind of strategies to perform the tasks? If so, were those strategies fostering autonomous learning? | |

Appendix J: Corpus Sample McCarten (2007)

Corpus A

Objectives

- Study the way we use language in different business situations.
- Identify specific vocabulary and expressions for business contexts.
- Provide authentic examples of essential business written and spoken language

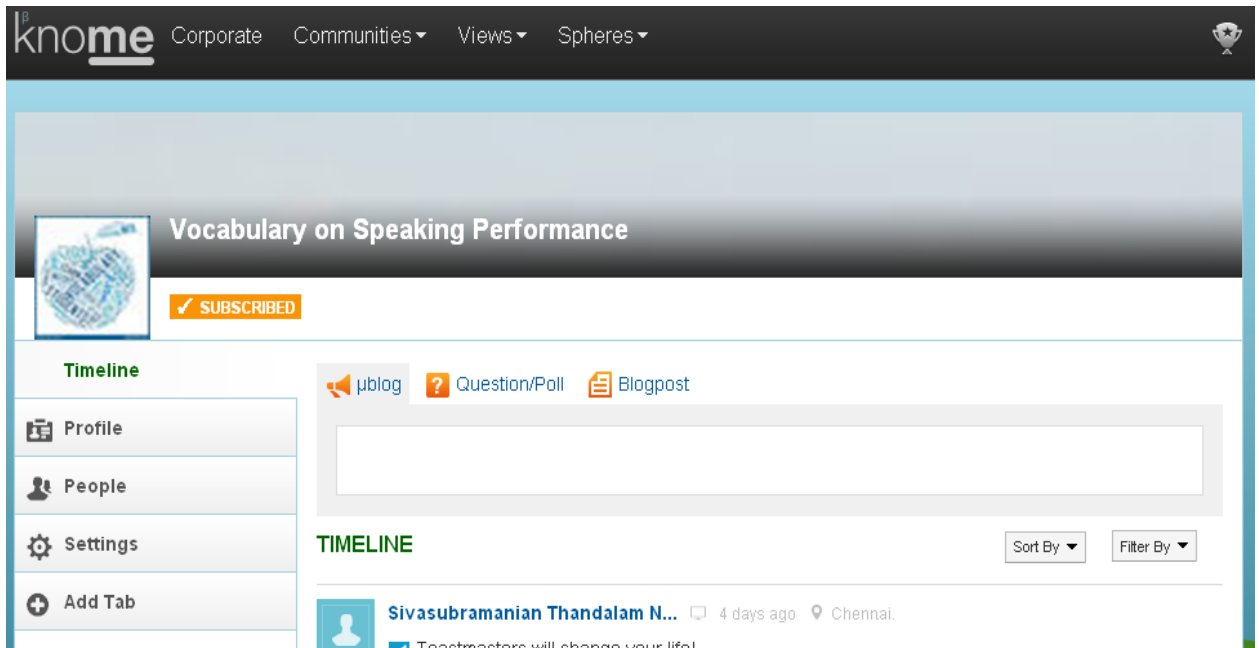
Useful telephone vocabulary and phrases in English.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Making contact: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hello / Good morning / Good afternoon ... • This is John Brown speaking • Could I speak to please? • I'd like to speak to..... • I'm trying to get..... |
| Giving more information: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm calling from Tokyo / Paris / New York / Sydney ... • I'm calling on behalf of Mr. X ... |
| Taking a call: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • X speaking. • Can I help you? |
| Asking for a name / information: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who's calling please? • Who's speaking? • Where are you calling from? • Are you sure you have the right number / name? |
| Asking the caller to wait: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold the line please. • Could you hold on please? • Just a moment please. |
| Connecting: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank you for holding. • The line's free now ... I'll put you through. • I'll connect you now. / I'm connecting you now. |
| Giving negative information: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm afraid the line's engaged. Could you call back later? • I'm afraid he's in a meeting at the moment. • I'm sorry. He's out of the office today. / He isn't in at the moment. |

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm afraid we don't have a Mr./Mrs./Ms/Miss. ... here • I'm sorry. There's nobody here by that name. • Sorry. I think you've dialled the wrong number. / I'm afraid you've got the wrong number. |
| Telephone problems: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The line is very bad ... Could you speak up please? • Could you repeat that please? • I'm afraid I can't hear you. • Sorry. I didn't catch that. Could you say it again please? |
| Leaving / Taking a message: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can I leave / take a message? • Would you like to leave a message? • Could you give him/her a message? • Could you ask him/her to call me back? • Could you tell him/her that I called? • Could you give me your name please? • Could you spell that please? • What's your number please? |

Retrieved from: http://www.learn-english-today.com/business-english/presentations_useful-phones.html

Appendix K: Research Community



Appendix L: Visual Materials



The journal could include:

- research notes
- personal comments on your own work
- notes/images from gallery visits
- quotes
- extracts from lectures, tutorials, books, journals
- photos/sketches

How to structure reflective writing

Description (don't make this too long)

What is it? What happened? Why am I talking about it?

Interpretation

What is important, relevant, interesting, useful?

How is it similar to or different from others?

How can it be explored, explained using contemporary theories?

Outcome

What have I learned from this?

How will it influence my future work?



REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

The journal can record:

- where your inspiration comes from
- how you make use of your ideas to develop your work
- your awareness of the cultural context (setting) in which you work



Appendix M: Handouts

Past Tense Irregular Verbs Pelmanism

| | | | |
|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| bring | brought | sing | sang |
| buy | bought | sleep | slept |
| dream | dreamt | spend | spent |
| fall | fell | stand | stood |
| feel | felt | think | thought |
| fly | flew | read | read |
| lose | lost | run | ran |
| teach | taught | wear | wore |


Written by Kyle Johnson for Teach-This.com ©2013

TEACH-THIS.COM

Past Tense Talk

Write short answers to the following statements. Write your answers down in a random order in the squares below.

- something you brought to class today
- something you bought yesterday
- what you dreamt about last night
- the last time you fell in love
- how you felt at the beginning of the lesson
- the last time you flew somewhere
- the last thing you lost
- something your teacher taught you last lesson
- the last time you sang
- the last time you slept for less than six hours
- how much money you spent yesterday
- the last time you stood somewhere for a long time
- something you thought was frightening when you were a child
- the last book you read
- the last time you ran more than 100 metres
- something you wore last weekend that you really like



Answers

| | | | |
|--|--|--|--|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Written by Kyle Johnson for Teach-This.com ©2013

Appendix O: Field Notes

| | |
|--|---|
| Date | 27/10/2013 |
| Activity Description | Focus Group about the importance of vocabulary on speaking performance |
| What did I observe in terms of... | Comments |
| <u>Speaking performance</u> Did my learners have any kind of improvement? | They requested guidance to understand the concept of a focus group and how it works, but at the end they were able to follow the dynamic and share their ideas. They express their answers in English to all questions. |
| <u>Vocabulary</u> Did my learners use the vocabulary taught? Did they use any word from the corpus? | Learners did not mention any strategies particularly used for vocabulary improvement. They actually mention strategies in general like listening to music, watching TV and reading. |
| <u>Learners' Strategies</u> Did my learners use any kind of strategies to perform the tasks? If so, were those strategies fostering autonomous learning? | They were following focus group moderator and were listening carefully partners answers. |
| <u>Self-assessment</u> Did my learners peer-assess or self-assess their work? If so, How did they do it? | They come up with some conclusion about the importance of vocabulary on speaking performance and they realized the need to set effective strategies which make them improve their speaking performance. |
| Aspects to improve in further lessons... | N/A |
| <i>Extra Notes (Reflective Learning Journals)</i> | It is a little hard for them to get used to reflect about how well they are carrying out their learning process. |

Appendix P: Reflective Journal and Action Plan



Reflective Journal #2 - D

| | |
|--|--|
| Date | 20-10-13 |
| Activity Description | We perform an activity in which we could practice the vocabulary to have a phone conversation. |
| Questions | Comments |
| Did I learn anything? If so, What did I learn? | Yes, I did. I learned key phrases to have a phone conversation and I design a plan for using <u>this expressions</u> in the future. |
| How did I feel doing this activity? | I liked the activity, but as usual, I get very nervous speaking English, I understand what they say but I find it hard to speak the language for fear of a mispronunciation. |
| Was this activity useful for me? Why? | It's very useful, not only for my work but also for my study. Today it's important to can at least have this type of phone conversations. |
| What will I do differently? | Don't use so many buzzwords. I think a lot before I talk. |
| Did I need extra vocabulary during the lesson? If so, when? | I use extra phrases in practice whit my classmates to complement the activity. We shared the words we know before. |
| What type of vocabulary do I need to learn? | I need to learn different vocabulary to establish a business conversation |
| Were the expressions of the corpus useful to do the task? If so, how many words did I use from it? | So much useful. Tuse a 60% the expressions. |
| Was this activity useful to improve my speaking? Why? | Of course, it was very useful. These activities help me improve my pronunciation, increase my vocabulary and especially, lose the fear of speaking English. |
| Any action plan? Extra Notes | Although I get so nervous I really like this type of activity where mainly are conversations, as we improve pronunciation and increase vocabulary. <u>An action plan for me it is prepare before the call o a presentation the words that I need so that will make me feel more secure to participate. A list of words for each activity I did one for mails other for meetings.</u> |