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**EXTENSIVE READING WITH CHILDREN: A SMALL-SCALE  
STUDY**

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## **Abstract**

En este Trabajo de Final de Grado pretendo centrarme en el aprendizaje del vocabulario a través de la lectura por placer focalizado en niños de entre aproximadamente 9 y 10 años de edad. Dejando de lado el tradicional método de enseñanza en relación a la lectura, he decidido centrarme en otro método menos común para así comprobar su efectividad conocida como lectura extensiva el cual consiste en leer por placer, para disfrutar. Es un proyecto centrado en el aprendizaje del vocabulario a través de la lectura. Los estudiantes leen 4 historias cortas cada uno de las cuales se examinan antes, durante y después de estas. El objetivo es comprobar la efectividad a la hora de adquirir vocabulario utilizando el método de lectura mencionado.

Palabras claves: frecuencia, exposición, léxico y repetición.

This *Treball de Fi de Grau* is focusing on the acquisition of vocabulary or new words through extensive reading in children between the years of 9 and 10 approximately. In order to avoid the naturalistic approach of learning new vocabulary established in classroom settings I chose the method of extensive reading, which is the action of reading for pleasure, in order to examine the students. It is a project centred in the learning through reading, the students are asked to read 4 different short stories each one from which they are assessed before, while and after the actual reading. The main aim of the project is to compare both the skill for the acquisition of words before and after and therefore to observe the effectiveness of extensive reading method.

Key Words: frequency, exposure, lexic and repetition.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Vocabulary is important for language acquisition; without proper vocabulary recognition the wholly acquisition of a language fails. Therefore, vocabulary recognition is definitely necessary for the whole acquisition of a language. However, vocabulary acquisition is not an easy aspect of any language and it does not happen overnight. As any aspect when you learn a new language from the very beginning, vocabulary acquisition is a process and as it is, indeed, a process, it develops gradually, usually from less to more.

Moreover, the method for this acquisition of vocabulary to happen is not worthless. What is more, it is of importance since it is the way you are exposed to for your learning to happen. On many occasions, the method used in the learning of a language might have been decisive for a successful vocabulary recognition. In fact, this vocabulary recognition is a feature that has been proved and researched all throughout many years but sometimes with better results than others.

Reading methodology has been proved as being one of the most encouraging methods. What is more, recent research shows that reading has been undergone positive results and that students have reacted positively towards it. However, this project does not only focus on the issue of reading as a whole but it highlights the concept of extensive reading, which is reading for pleasure. That is why, this project takes the concept of extensive reading and applies it at classroom context in order to analyse vocabulary recognition in children. Leaving aside traditional reading approaches which mostly take place in current classroom contexts, extensive reading may give a different perspective of vocabulary acquisition at the same time as it gives the students more freedom, both for their actual reading and for their vocabulary progression.

Students are going to be assessed of vocabulary recognition before, while and after their reading process. Therefore, this experiment is going to prove the ability of children vocabulary recognition through the method of extensive reading, and consequently see if students actually achieve real vocabulary improvement.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1. Introduction

In this section I am going to firstly develop the concept of vocabulary. I am also be talking about the Mental Lexicon and its importance when it comes to the acquisition of new words as well as the concept of frequency in relation to words. Then, I am centring on the issue of vocabulary learning, first on its own and then both in L1 and L2 and eventually I will be explaining extensively the issue of reading as a good path towards the learning of vocabulary.

### 2.2. What is vocabulary?

According to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (1828) vocabulary may stand for “a list or collection of words or of words and phrases usually alphabetically arranged and explained or defined”. However, it is a fact that all over the years there have been many definitions provided for the concept of vocabulary as it is an extremely wide-opened topic. Therefore there is not an exact and concise definition for it. Moreover, vocabulary is a feature which is constantly changing since it increases in number of words year after year. The growth of vocabulary may take place due to the changes in society and the adaptation of this through the new emerging societies as new and different words emerge every year.

Therefore, vocabulary is a huge part of the acquisition of a language and, what is more, it is actually a key factor when it comes to achieve a fully use of language and it is also highly needed in order to achieve a good understanding of a text as well as to communicate. Without the proper knowledge of vocabulary, the understanding of that language fails and likewise, the full acquisition of that language is not achieved.

### *2.3. The Mental Lexicon and the importance of it towards the acquisition of new words*

#### 2.3.1. What is the Mental Lexicon?

When we, as learners, acquire new words, these words are set someplace where they are gathered. Collectively with the old ones we have previously learnt. This place is called Mental Lexicon and regarding the acquisition of new words it is important to take into account what the Mental Lexicon is and how it does work in relation with the acquisition of words. The Mental Lexicon is basically where the words are stored in our brain. In other words, it is like we had our own dictionary located in our brain. There, it is stored the meaning, pronunciation and spelling of all the words previously acquired and learnt. It is important for the acquisition of new words but it is also important for communicating. It is in communication when the Mental Lexicon is really useful. When you communicate with another person, your brain automatically and effortlessly activate words that are piled in your Mental Lexicon. When it comes to reading comprehension it happens the same; as you read a text your brain activates the words you need to understand the text as long as the words have been previously learnt. Therefore, the Mental Lexicon is not only essential when it comes to the communication with other people but also for the understanding of a text.

#### 2.3.2. Differences in L1 and L2 Mental Lexicon

What is more, the Mental Lexicon is clearly different from your L1 than your L2 as well as there are clear differences when it comes to the learning of a language if it is your first language (L1) or your second language (L2). L2 learners are not exposed to a real and natural lexical input since they are presented with pre-selected material on the basis of what the topic is about and/or the general theme of the unit. For instance, EFL course books, the ones that are handed in English lessons currently at schools or High-Schools. Those books are made of specific exercises which are concretely designed for students of a foreign language. Moreover, the frequency, the quantity and even the quality of exposure is far different from the native speaker's language fact that could interfere with the progression of the acquisition. L1 input is more natural and clear whereas L2

input is more forced and has only one purpose which is for learners exclusively. However, when learning a second language is common to have interferences from your first language fact that makes that on many occasions those interferences do not help in the wholly acknowledgment of the word fact that sometimes may cause differences in the meaning of the word.

Consequently, it seems that the adaptation of new words whether if it is your L1 or your L2 is far different. Everything involving the L1 is more natural and incidental whereas when it comes to the L2 everything is more pre-established and forced.

#### 2.4. Word Frequency

The most important words of a language are the ones that appear the most, either in a text or in a conversation. In other words, the more frequent a word is in a text or conversation, the more relevance should it have. Frequency is of high relevance when it comes to the acquisition of new words in a language. The more a word appears, the more it is likely to be learned by the student and therefore, to be acquired. Regarding the notion of frequency Nation (2001) splits the term of vocabulary in two different sections: the first one which is denominated high-frequency vocabulary (or high-frequency words) and the second one which is named as low-frequency vocabulary (or low-frequency words). High-frequency words are those words that occur the most in English as “in English there are around 2,000 high-frequency words” (Nation 2001; 99) including nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs. In fact, he highlights two important word lists of high-frequency words: *Vocabulary Control Movement* which was one of the first word list based on frequency. After this one, there were other that follow this one such as the *Michael West's General Service List of English Words* (1953) and another one, smaller and more addressed to learners willing to do academic study in English which is the *Academic Word List* (Coxhead 2000) whose list of words may contain words as *correspond*, *estimate* or *furthermore* among others, words that are considered to be of a more high-level since they are supposed to be acquired in a later stage of learning. On the other hand, there are the low-frequency words which are the words that do not appear constantly neither in a text nor in a conversation. Indeed, surely there are words that you have come across with few times all throughout your

learning of a language, in this case English. In addition, the concept of frequency is strongly related to repetition. Repetition is also part of the process of learning vocabulary; certainly the more a word is repeated throughout a text, the greater are the possibilities for this word to be acquired by the learner. Likewise, it is necessary for the fully attainment of the word to have been previously processed it many times in order to actually state that the word has been fully engaged in our brains.

Hence, vocabulary should take an important place in second language instruction since without proper knowledge of words there is no clue to understand a text.

### *2.5. A general vision of vocabulary learning*

The first thing you want to know when you are going to learn something new is to know what the best method to do so is since you clearly want to achieve the best knowledge you can. In my case, I am focusing on the acquisition of vocabulary and when it comes to the learning of vocabulary there are far many methods that have been proved. However, generally speaking it is said that the learning of new words does not take place unidirectional which means that it does not only happen through intentional exposure but also through incidental exposure. In other words, it either happen because the learner(s) want such exposure and therefore look for opportunities for this exposure to happen (intentional) or the learner(s) are not consciously aware of that exposure taking place as they are paying attention to another specific item or feature (incidental). However, and according to many researchers the best method to achieve a learning of new words is the mixture of both types of learnings. The term ‘exposure’ is key in regards to the learning of anything and even more when it has to do with the acquisition of a language, in this case vocabulary. The more exposure you have from a language, the more likely you are to have a greater learning of new words. Nevertheless, the process of learning new words is not easy and obviously it is not fast. It is important to bear in mind that the learning of new words is a gradual process; firstly, we need a good base and when this base is strong enough, we can start building new stages. In fact, having a good base is fundamental to let the learning progress and therefore get a good acquisition. In addition, the learning is an attainment of knowledge or skills that are



achieved through experience, studies or lesson. So, the older you are, the more words you have acquired. Researchers who have been working on this issue for many years claim that the more words a learner knows, the higher is the attachment of a student(s) towards the language. To this extent, exposure and experience may correlate regarding the learning of new words in a language and they may be equally important for a good acquisition of it. Nonetheless, the learning of vocabulary may differ from the first language and the second language.

The learning of vocabulary begins its process from the very infancy and continues all through its way to adult age. As I mentioned before, the development of vocabulary is a gradual process so its growth, in a person, may increase as the person also grows up. Anne E. Cunningham (2005) says that an 18-month old child may acquire 5 new words per day and 8,000 words by the age of 6. Moreover, children get to acquire 3,000 words a year and a student graduated from high school should have known 40,000 words by the time he or she finishes high-school. After all, there are certain numbers of words that you are supposed to have learnt by certain ages in order to follow specific patterns of learning.

What is more, the acquisition of new words in children occurs half through systematic instruction and half through incidental encounters, specifically in the context of reading. The more they read, the faster the acquisition of new words is. “There is a predictable relationship between percentage coverage of known words and comprehension” (Hu and Nation 2000; 204). Most learners in their studies needed 98% coverage to gain adequate comprehension of a fiction text. At 95% coverage, some gained adequate comprehension but most did not. This shows that the more words the learners understand from a text, the better they comprehend the same text. As well, the lower the quantity of unknown words, the greater the supporting context around the unknown words would work. This fact leads to a better comprehension of the text will and therefore to success in acquisition. However, to reach to the correct acquirement of these words needs for a previous exposure and learning of these words.

When you learn a foreign language you come across with many new words that you do not know the meaning of and that you need to know so as to acquire successfully the comprehension of a text, either a book or simply a magazine. Together with grammar, vocabulary is hugely essential when it comes to a fully or even partially understanding of a text. To know the meaning of words is important in order to understand a text. Hence, the more words you know the meaning of, the better comprehension of the text you will achieve.

## *2.6. The methodology of reading to learn vocabulary*

Many researchers have established reading as a great method for the acquisition of new words as reading promotes the acquisition of vocabulary. In fact, reading is essential for this process to take place as it is something which develops gradually at the same time of the learner's capability of acquisition. McKeown (1991) says that under certain specific circumstances reading promotes the learning of vocabulary. Also, "reading is important because the comparison of large corpora consistently shows that written texts are richer in lexis than spoken ones" (Horst 2005; 356). Therefore, a written text provides more lexical words and the opportunities of acquisition are much higher than in oral communication. However, when it comes to reading we cannot forget context. Context is what really helps, sometimes, to understand the corresponding meaning of a word. For example, Nagy, Herman and Anderson (1985) say that children gain in word knowledge after reading words in context. For example, there are occasions in which children take advantage of the use of context in order to guess the meaning of some words. However, it is not that easy since we have some factors we must take into account concerning reading: the difficulty of the text, the level of comprehension of the children, the type of text that they are exposed to and even the number of times the word appears throughout the text. For instance, Nation (2001) in his book *Learning Vocabulary in Another Language* establishes the four strands of the reading process: (1) meaning-focused input which is done through extensive reading, (2) meaning-focused output which takes place when learners talk about what they have read or write what they have read, (3) language-focused learning which consists of the deliberate learning of vocabulary and the deliberate study of reading strategies and finally (4) fluency

developments which is a major role to play in a reading course and which can occur through easy extensive reading, focused speed reading course and/or activities like repeated reading. At this point, it is a fact that the majority of encounters that you have of words are through reading. Reading is key for exposure of words, either for known words or unknown words.

Exposure to individual words is also key in the learning of vocabulary and it actually happens many times through the process of reading. Likewise, the more times you are exposed to a new word you are, the higher is the possibility of a positive acquisition of that one. Moreover, the input you get from the exposure in order to preserve a good learning is very important. The input should be appropriate for the students as well as adequate to their level. As Namhee Suk states: “reading ability is only likely to develop gradually when L2 learners are continually exposed to abundant meaningful input, or extensive reading” (2016; 73). Not only should be the reading input adequate to the students’ level but also should it be meaningful. If it is not adequate the acquisition of the word may fail. To have proper exposure to input is determining in order to achieve proper knowledge. In addition, you need to know a certain number of words in order to understand the majority of the text, otherwise the comprehension of the text will fail considering that the encountering of words would not be enough.

It seems that all regarding the method of reading is positive and most of the researches, and researchers, support the idea of it. Therefore, reading is actually a great opportunity for learners to construct and develop a good vocabulary.

#### 2.6.1. Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading

When the learner starts studying a language reading may be one of the most difficult parts and that usually happens because of the way the reading is approached in class. When it comes to reading approaches in class, there are two types: intensive reading and extensive reading.

On the one hand, intensive reading is the one that is, nowadays, used in classrooms settings at schools. It consists of a reading comprehension followed by some specific exercises related to what the learner has previously read. Most of the times the exercises are either questions the learner needs to answer or exercises which the learner needs to fill the gaps. It is also very common the true or false statements activity. Nevertheless, these are the most common ones which does not mean that there are others.

On the other hand, extensive reading is not that used in classroom settings and consists of learners reading for enjoyment to develop general reading skills. In opposition to intensive reading, extensive reading does not usually take place in class and happens more at home. Indeed, extensive reading has not been fully developed in classroom settings yet since “L2 teachers seem to be reluctant to implement extensive reading in their classes” (Suk 2016; 75). In fact, Grabe (2009) and Nation (2009) provide number of reasons of why this reading approach has not been established in L2 settings yet and it seems to be because that reading approach is still considered as not having the proper input when it comes to the learning of a second language. What is more, they also highlights that extensive reading is mostly unappreciated due to the fact that the teachers sometimes have the feeling that students do not learn when they read in classroom.

Despite the fact that extensive reading does not have the approval of teachers in some aspects, it has been proved that extensive reading is still a good method to learn new words. That is why, I decided to focus my project on this approach as well as to see if this method actually works on children.

#### 2.6.2. Why extensive reading?

In the previous section I briefly defined the concept of extensive reading, which is why in this section I would like to be more precise and therefore develop in more detail this topic.

Extensive reading has been all throughout the years defined in many different ways and maybe there is no one and exact definition for it. According to Grabe and Stoller (2011; it is a kind of reading that “exposes learners to large quantities of material within their linguistic competence” (286). Furthermore, there are many researchers and therefore studies that confirm that extensive reading is the best approach when it comes to the acquisition of new vocabulary. Recent research shows that much of incidental vocabulary learning occurs when exposed to extensive reading (Pigada and Schmitt 2006; 94) and also other studies that have proved its effectivity towards the improvement of reading abilities and therefore of vocabulary retention are a few examples of how extensive reading has positively worked on the acquisition of new words. However, it is important to highlight that the texts provided to the students have to share their level and not exceed it. Reading within the reader’s linguistic competence can contribute to developing vocabulary sight and thus to reading fluency (Day and Bamford 1998; 74).

There have been experiments that show positive results towards extensive reading. For example, Nation mentions a study orchestrated by Macalister (2010) in which students demonstrated a greater growth of enthusiasm towards reading. They chose their own books which they had to read two per week. After recovering all the data Macalister found that their enthusiasm was higher than before. Also, there is another study that shows great gains of extensive reading called the ‘book flood’ which was made by Ellis (1991). In this study, students had to spend most of their foreign language classes reading books that were of interest to them in order to develop general reading skills.

Likewise, after having read all these experiments I would say that the benefits of the extensive reading have been really proved and that they are of highly importance as to take them into consideration in classroom settings. However, even though extensive reading has been proved to have good results when it comes to the acquisition of vocabulary there are still some reluctance towards it. Nowadays, not all the L2 teachers see extensive reading as a good method to proceed. In fact, L2 teachers do not see reading fluency as part of the reading curriculum or even as a goal in second language



teaching and acquisition. Nevertheless, and it has been proved that many of the acquisition of new vocabulary has been done through extensive reading.

These are some of the reasons of why I decided to avoid traditional classroom vocabulary instruction and focused on extensive reading as a method to increase vocabulary acquisition. After all the positive results, I strongly reckon that it is actually a good way of learning and I am willing to see if it works well on children.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- a. Do students really acquire new words with the extensive reading method? How many words did students learn from reading 4 graded books?
- b. Are book reports useful when it comes to the capture of students' reactions towards books?

### **4. THE METHOD**

#### *4.1. Design*

Children are presented with 7 short books from which they have to choose 4 each one. Afterwards, they are given a Pre-Reading Test which they fill before actually starting reading the stories. Then, every time they finish reading one of the books they are given a Book Report in which they have some questions they have to answer. When they finally finish reading the books they have to fill a Post-Reading Test, the same exact one as the Pre-Reading Test and that is all.

Therefore, there is one Pre-Reading Test, each student fills 4 Book Reports and finally one Post-Reading Test.

#### *4.2. Context.*

Extensive reading has been proved as being one successful method for the acquisition of vocabulary and that is one of the reasons why I decided to focus my project on the

acquisition of new words in the context of reading, extensive reading specifically. Moreover, I find interesting the fact of applying a different way of reading approach in a class. What is more, I always wanted to go beyond the actual traditional teaching approach and observe what would happen if learners are faced with different manners of acquiring a new language.

Therefore, and as I am currently a teacher in a language school I thought that I should take advantage of this fact and use my students to put in practice this experiment. I actually teach different ages but I decided to focus on children between ages 9-10 because children are more difficult to attach to any aspect of a language. In addition, children are usually less motivated of learning a new language since they do not see English, or learning a foreign language, as a path to the future or even necessary yet. I expect that by doing this experiment they, at least, they find anything of their interest.

#### 4.2. *Participants*

The participants of my research project in extensive reading are 7 students between 9 and 10 years old whose first languages are Spanish and Catalan. However, there is a higher presence of Spanish as being the mother tongue in opposition to Catalan. Currently, they all have English classes at school as part of the syllabus and the only exposure of English besides school is the language school. They all have had previous exposure to English, either at school, or other extracurricular English classes previous years or both. Moreover, most of them go to public schools except for one who goes to a private school.

#### 4.3. *Instruments for Vocabulary Assessment*

The instruments I used in order to perform my practical part of the *Treball de Fi Grau* have been 8 short books for non-native speakers of English. The books are between A1-A2 levels since it is approximately the level we are giving in class. Each student had to choose 4 of the book from the list below. The books are:

- Cadwallader, Jane, *Uncle Jack and the Bakonzi Tree*. ELI, 2009
- Kamini Khanduri, et al. *Camouflage*, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Kubuitsile, Lauri, *Elephants/The Elephant's Friend*, Macmillan, 2013
- Shipton, Paul, and Andy Hammond. *Dogs /The Big Show*. Macmillan, 2007.
- Shipton, Paul, et al. *The Big Storm*. Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Spilsbury, Louise, et al. *Electricity*, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Suett, Lisa and Andre Rivola. *The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse*. ELI, 2017

Afterwards, and before starting reading the books, they were given a vocabulary recognition test (a Pre-Reading Test, see Appendix 1) which included 40 vocabulary items (10 per book, as they read 4 books, therefore 40). These vocabulary items were divided in two types of exercises: the first exercise was about matching two columns and tested vocabulary the first columns had 5 English written words (L2) words and the second column had 6 Spanish written words (L2), they had to discard one of the words; the second exercise, on the other hand, consisted of translating some words from L1 to L2 (English to Spanish) and tested recall of vocabulary knowledge. Here there is one example of the exercises:

- **Match these two columns:**

1. man _	a. tio
2. uncle_	b. rey
3. leaf_	c. hombre
4. king_	d. hoja
5. laugh_	e. reir
	f. hacer

- **Provide the meaning of the following words:**
- forest:
- to grow:
- people:
- behind:



- down:

Furthermore, when they finish reading each book they had to fill a Book Report (see Appendix 2) which consisted of some questions they had to answer about the book they had just read. The Book Report consisted of 7 sections: the title of the book, whether the book was easy, OK or difficult, a section called 'words' where they had to write some words they remembered from the book, what they learnt from the book, their favourite part or page of the book, their opinion and if they liked the book. Finally, after they read the 4 books they had to answer again a vocabulary recognition test (Post- Reading Test) which was the same as the one they completed before reading the books

#### 4.4. The creation of the vocabulary test

In order to do the Pre-Reading Test and therefore, the Post-Reading Test (as they are the same) I first typed all the stories, one by one, in the computer and afterwards I went to a webpage called *Lextutor* (See Appendix 3). I used *Lextutor* in order to know the most common words within each book. So, I copied all the texts one by one (See Annex 3.1). When you submit the text the count of words appear as well as their frequency, each word appears all the times it actually is in the book. What is more, they are divided into four frequency categories (See Appendix 3.3): (a) the 1,000 most frequent word families of English; (b) the 2,001-2,000 most frequent zone; (c) *the Academic Word List (AWL) (2000)* a set of 570 word families that occur frequently in university across academic disciplines; and (d) off-list words which are less frequent words and proper nouns that do not occur on any of the earlier lists. Once I had I decided not to include any of 'off-list' section in any of the Pre-Reading Tests since they are supposed to be of a superior level and I was interested in assessing regarding their current level.

Eventually, I created one different test per student as each one had chosen different books.



#### 4.5. Reading Intervention

Each student had to read 4 different books and here there are the books that had to read each of one my students:

Students' Names	Books for reading
Student 1	<i>Uncle Jack and the Bakonzi Tree, Dogs /The Big Show, The Big Storm, Electricity,</i>
Student 2	<i>Dogs /The Big Show, Uncle Jack and the Bakonzi Tree, Elephants/The Elephant's Friend, The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse</i>
Student 3	<i>Dogs /The Big Show, The Big Storm, Elephants/The Elephant's Friend, Uncle Jack and the Bakonzi Tree</i>
Student 4	<i>Dogs /The Big Show, The Big Storm, Elephants/The Elephant's Friend, The Town Mouse and the Country Mouse</i>
Student 5	<i>Uncle Jack and the Bakonzi Tree, The Big Storm, Dogs /The Big Show, Camouflage,</i>
Student 6	<i>Dogs /The Big Show, Camouflage, Elephants/The Elephant's Friend, Electricity</i>
Student 7	<i>Uncle Jack and the Bakonzi Tree, The Big Storm, Electricity, Dogs /The Big Show</i>

However, after they started with the actual reading part they had to do a test. First, the Pre-Reading Test, which did not take so long, was completed. As well, students had the instructions of how to proceed with it at the very beginning of the test as well as an

example of how to do the first exercise, which might have been the most difficult to understand how to do it.

Once they completed the Pre-Reading Test, they began with the first story and continuing this way during 4 weeks; one story per week. Moreover, I decided that they were going to read the books at home. “Because extensive reading can be done both in and outside of class, it is important for teachers to consistently monitor individual students’ reading progress” (Suk 2016; 87) I decided that every time they finished one of the stories they had to fill a Book Report (See Appendix 2). As in my case students only read the books at home, in other words, outside the class, I thought that was important to keep checking their progress which is the main reason of Book Reports. In addition, book reports were basically to check their comprehension level regarding the stories as well as their vocabulary attainment. There was also a part in which students had to write down their opinion of the book, just because they chose the book it did not mean that they had to like it. That is why, I found interesting the inclusion of one section in which they were free to express their thoughts about the book. Books reports are appropriate for assessing reading comprehension, together with vocabulary acquisition, and therefore, progression.

By the end of the experiment, in total, they have had to have completed 4 book reports each student.

#### *4.5 Procedure*

It was a 4-week experimental project, approximately. So, the first step of the procedure consisted of letting students choose their 4 favourite books out of 8. Before starting the reading of the books and therefore, the actual 4 weeks of the project the books were presented on a table from which they chose the 4 ones they were more interested in or attracted to. The point of letting them choose the books was not forcing them to read something they do not like and therefore to see if by letting them choose the books they enjoy the reading more.

Then, when each student had decided the books they wanted the week after I delivered to them the Pre-Reading Test which they completed. As this group is once per week so each week I gave them a different story each one which they had to read during the week. Then. Before I gave them a new story they had to fill a report of the book they had just read.

After all, when they finished reading the 4 stories I delivered them a Post-Reading Test which they completed.

## 5. RESULTS

### 5.1. Pre-Reading Test and Post- Reading Test

Some students have been more enthusiastic towards this reading method than others. Neither did I expect that all the students reacted the same way. However, what I did not expect was that some students acted the way they did. I know my students and some of them I thought they were not engaged, they actually were. What is more, I found highlighting the fact that they filled both exercises quite well, which I really thought it would be otherwise. Now, I would like to look deeply on Pre-Reading Tests.

As for the first type of exercise, there is a prominence of correct answers over incorrect answers. In fact, the percentage of non-answered words is lower in comparison with the total of vocabulary items students were assessed of. The first exercise of Pre -Reading Tests has worked better than the second one, it may be due to the typology of exercise. Students might have found easier this exercise as they had words in their L2. However, there have also some mistakes. For instance, some of the students had problems with the differentiation of ‘country’ and ‘town’ as ‘country’ meaning ‘campo’ and ‘town’ meaning ‘ciudad’; they actually put it the other way around. Moreover, the recognition of vocabulary has been more problematic regarding the book of *The Big Storm* as I may have observed. It is the one they had more problems with and therefore, the one with more incorrect answers among all.



On the other hand, the second typology of exercise has been more controversial. Incorrect answers, together with non-answered words have predominated over correct answers. I strongly think that it is because of the exercise typology; in the previous exercise they had the correspondences of L2 words in their L1 whereas in this second typology they did not. Indeed I found that all the 100 % students who had the word 'feather' misunderstood the meaning and translated it into 'padre' instead of 'pluma' I suppose that due to the fact they both share similar spelling.

In order to observe the improvement in vocabulary recognition of my students, if any, from the Pre-Reading Test to the Post-Reading Test I typed the results. To do so I created two different tables; one for the Pre-Test and the other one for the Post-Test. Both contain the students' name (horizontally), together with each vocabulary item (vertically). When it comes to assessing, 1 was for correct answers and 0 for either incorrect or non-answered words. In fact, both tables (Pre-Reading Test and Post-Reading Test) are exactly the same but with different results. Regarding the Pre-Reading Tests I have to say that the results are positive, and that most of the students passed. To compare both Pre-Reading Tests' Results and Post and to illustrate the gains, if any, I created a table:

**Table 1: Comparison between Pre-Reading Tests and Post-Reading Tests' results**

Students' Names	Pre-Test Score	Post-Test Score	Gains (%)
Student 1	25	27	13%
Student 2	21	25	21%
Student 3	16	16	NO GAINS
Student 4	29	29	NO GAINS
Student 5	19	20	5%
Student 6	25	27	13%
Student 7	31	30	-11%



Post-Reading Tests compared to Pre-Reading Tests show no improvement on the part of 3 students and small improvement on the part of the remaining 4 students. The student who learnt the most learned 4 words, then there were two students who learned 2 words and one learned 1 word.

## 5.2. Book Reports

When I first thought about doing this experiment I did not have in mind analysing book reports. However, when I started taking a look at them every time students filled one I really found interesting things. These reports have been very useful as I have been able to monitor them, and therefore to have some feedback from them. Moreover, I have been able to be aware of their reaction towards the books; if they liked it or not, if they found the book easy, difficult or adequate to their level or even their opinion about it. When you do an experiment as this precise one, it is very important to have your students monitored because otherwise they may diversify and not follow the patterns of the experiment.

In order to analyse students' reactions towards the books I chose 3 sections from the Book Report to analyse in more detail. I think that these ones are the most interesting ones.

**Table 1: First analysis of a Book Report's section**

<b>SECTION:</b> The book was...	EASY	OK	DIFFICULT
Student 1	3/4	1/4	0/4
Student 2	0/4	3/4	1/4
Student 3	3/4	1/4	0/4
Student 4	2/4	2/4	0/4
Student 5	2/4	2/4	0/4
Student 6	1/4	3/4	0/4
Student 7	1/4	2/4	1/4

**Table 2: Second analysis of a Book Report's section**

SECTION: Did you like the book?	YES	NO
Student 1	4/4	0/4
Student 2	3/4	1/4
Student 3	4/4	0/4
Student 4	4/4	0/4
Student 5	3/4	1/4
Student 6	4/4	0/4
Student 7	3/4	1/4

**Table 3: Third analysis of a Book Report's section**

SECTION: What did they learnt?	Average Answers*
Student 1	New words
Student 2	Types of dogs or names of tress
Student 3	New words or improvement in reading
Student 4	New words
Student 5	Many animals
Student 6	New words
Student 7	Different animals or new words

\*I chose the most interesting answers.

Therefore, student's opinions and reactions have been really divergent. Some of them enjoyed the stories and have reached to be attached to them. On the other hand, there were others that did not like the stories. To begin with, I did not expect every student to like every single book. It is me and I do not like all the books I read. What is more, disliking is part of the process, neither all the books are the same nor all the stories have to be interesting to them. When it comes to the section of 'What did you learn?' which is on the report, I have got some curious as well as interesting answers. For instance, there have been some students that have written down as an answer: 'I learnt new

words' and I found it hilarious as my project is precisely focused on that. Among all them I found more similar answers but that one was the one that I liked the most. Even there has been one student that has written down that she reads better, right after having read the story. Also, when it comes to the Dogs' story there has been a student who has learnt many types of dogs. The same happened in relation to Elephants' story. In both they have learnt interesting facts about the animals. To be honest I have to say that the stories of animals have been the most they have been attached to.

Likewise, I strongly reckon that to have done these book reports has been highly positive both for me, as a teacher, and for my students. As well, this book reports and its format (See Appendix 2) has been the ideal way to achieve feedback from my students and therefore, to know their response towards the books.

## 6. DISCUSSION

After having analysed and processed all the information, more concretely vocabulary items, gathered from all the tests I handed to my students before and after they started with their reading period, it is safe to conclude that learners did not learn as many words as I expected or as it has been showed in other studies. So I have to say that vocabulary recognition has not been successful as they learnt on average 1 word per student which is, indeed, not a very successful result.

However, it is not the first study that show few gain in vocabulary as here have been other studies that have shown little improvement as well. For example, Pitts, White and Krashen (1989) carried out a study in which learners acquire 2 words on average. There was also another study carried out by Hafiz and Tudor (1989) in which learners did not have much gain regarding vocabulary acquisition. Another study that was carried out by Waring (2003) also showed little improvement. This study showed that out of 25 words, learners learnt remembered only one word after 3 months and none after 8 months. On the other hand, even though those studies do not show positive results regarding extensive reading methodology there have been other studies that did really show gain in vocabulary. For example, the study made Marlise Horst who, as well, focus her study on the learning L2 vocabulary through the methodology of extensive reading.



However, her results showed better results: “Participants gained new knowledge of more than half on the unfamiliar words that occurred in the ER materials they selected” (Horst 2005; 376) although they were not assessed in many words but in “a small number of self-rated words (100 items) and an even smaller test of demonstrated knowledge (one to three items per participant)

Nevertheless, to the vocabulary gains of the study, there are a number of factors that need to be taken into account. For instance, it is true that I did not control their reading. Even though they filled the book report I could not monitor their reading as they took place at home. I do not know if they read the books once, twice or three times or even if they read it at all. Neither could I control how they read them. They may have come up with an unknown words and I do not know if they searched for it on Internet or they simply ignored it.

Furthermore, there are other interesting variables to take into account. For example, the number of pre-selected items. They may have done better if the number of words presented in the test would lower. It is true that they had 40 vocabulary items each one (10 per book) which may have affected their retention. Another variable to consider is the time of reading. Every student has a different reading rate and therefore, their time in reading may differ. They may need more time to engage with the reading or simply to understand it. The study lasted 4 weeks and 4 books so maybe the duration was not adequate. What is more, age also may be of importance. It is possible that students at this age benefit more from a more intentional approach to vocabulary learning. Furthermore, their level could be also an important factor. Sahar, Cobb and Spada (2011) actually mention this issue. They say that the more advanced learners are, the more words they are supposed to know. Hence, if learners are children they know less words than is leaners are teenagers, for example. So, age has to do with a better acquisition of words. However, I would like to recall the study that I mentioned before which was carried out by Waring. In Waring (2003) study students were 20 years old and still there were almost no gain in vocabulary.

In addition, they may have needed more encounters with words in order to fully acquire the word as they could not have as much as encounters they actually needed For example, there have been studies that apart from the issue of exposing learners to

reading they added more exposure towards another mean. For instance, Krashen and Dupuy (1993) carried out a study in which the vocabulary gains were higher (6 words) but they did not use only the reading factor but they also added exposure to video. Therefore, learners had two types of input fact that may have helped to improve their vocabulary fact that portrays. Maybe my students needed more exposure in order to reinforce their vocabulary recognition, either with a video or another vocabulary task (Schmitt 2008). However, it is true that sometimes it is not enough having double exposure as in some occasions “a moderate correlation between the vocabulary gains and the number of occurrences of words in the graded reader has also been found. [...] but even frequent words in thereading, such as ‘grain’, which appears 13 times, seems to be insufficient for most students to learn this word.” (Huelva 2008; 19)

In addition to, when it comes to extensive reading it seems that the acquisition would have been better if the students had had previous exposure to the same words (Schmitt 2010; 30). So, may they would have developed better recognition with words they had been exposed to rather than completely new words.

Therefore, regarding the issue of extensive reading and its relation to vocabulary acquisition there have been some studies that have been successful while others have not. And also it is important to take the factors that may have leaded to that result.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

Learning any aspect of a language is not always easy. It is a process which may take more or less time to happen. Depending on the learner it may be more time consuming or less. Moreover, every learner develops his or her capacities in a different way and there never will be an equal establishment of any language aspect from each learner.

Vocabulary recognition has been tested in both in intentional learning and incidental learning. Indeed, both approaches have been proved to have positive results. However, I decided to focus on incidental learning of vocabulary items in extensive reading. In order to do that I decided to focus mu study on children of 9-10 years and afterwards I tested them.



After finishing the 4-weeks experiment and after recollecting all the data and therefore analysing it I have to say that results were not good. In my study on extensive reading there was few improvement from my students and the vocabulary recognition was very poor. Even though they improvement was few I strongly want to highlight the commitment they have undergone during the whole study. They really enjoyed reading despite the fact that they did not like all the stories. What is more, they really liked filling the book reports and those have showed

In addition, one of the most encouraging things of having done this study has been working with children. Working with children is completely different, they work differently and they live through things in a different way. It is very encouraging working with them.

To summarize, even the results were not as I expected it is true that I hoped higher improvement in vocabulary recognition. What is more, I have to say that I really enjoyed doing this study. I loved knowing more about the issue of reading and vocabulary and how they may relate. In addition, it has been very interesting the process of construction of the practical part. First of all, the stories to choose and how the children chose their stories. Afterwards, the process of coming up with the tests and the book reports, which I found extremely fascinating, have been also really useful.

It is said that every day you learn something new and I, as student, strongly reckon that it is nothing compared to increase your knowledge a little bit day after day. So it is important to not hesitate and enjoy learning.

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## APPENDICES

### 1. Pre-Reading Test and Post-Reading Test

VOCABULARY: First, you have to match the two columns by writing down the corresponding letter next to the correct word. Remember, there is one extra word that you are not going to need. Then, you have to provide the meaning of 5 different words. If you do not know the meaning of any word Here you are an example of how to do it:

1. dog <u>b</u>	a. mesa
2. computer <u>d</u>	b. perro
3. Table <u>a</u>	c. gato
	d. ordenador

- Match these two columns:

1. man _	a. tio
2. uncle_	b. rey
3. leaf_	c. hombre
4. king_	d. hoja
5. laugh_	e. reir
	f. hacer

- Provide the meaning of the following words:

- forest:
- to grow:
- people:
- behind:
- down:



- **Match these two columns:**

1. machine	a. cable
2. make	b. hacer
3. power	c. poder
4. coal	d. carbón
5. wire	e. máquina
	f. combustible

- **Provide the meaning of the following words:**

- move:
- to work:
- glass:
- safe
- station:

---

- **Match these two columns:**

1. bird	a. pelaje
2. many	b. cuerpo
3. stone	c. pájaro
4. body	d. muchos/as
5. fur	e. piedra
	f. cantidad

- **Provide the meaning of the following words:**

- sand:
- grass:
- feather.
- insect:
- fish:



---

• **Match these two columns:**

1. air	a. paraguas
2. dangerous	b. tormenta
3. cliff	c. peligroso
4. umbrella	d. acantilado
5. storm	e. aire
	f. rayo

• **Provide the meaning of the following words:**

- great:
- children:
- metal:
- rock:
- quiet:

---

• **Match these two columns:**

1. farmer	a. granjero/a
2. robber	b. tamaño
3. garden	c. hueso
4. size	d. jardín
5. bone	e. ladrón
	f. forma

• **Provide the meaning of the following words:**

- pet:
- whistle:
- street:
- wild:





- strong:

- 
- Match these two columns:

1. land	a. rama
2. paw	b. raiz
3. stick	c. trompa
4. trunk	d. garra
5. roots	e. tierra
	f. extremidad

- Provide the meaning of the following words:

- hunter:
- afraid:
- king:
- angry:
- gold:

- 
- Match these two columns:

1. country	a. pan
2. grass	b. ratones
3. mice	c. ciudad
4. town	d. campo
5. bread	e. hierba
	f. pueblo

- Provide the meaning of the following words:

- garage:
- hungry:



- beautiful:
- meat:
- busy:

- 
- **Match these two columns:**

1. rocks	a. rio
2. high	b. montaña
3. ground	c. suelo
4. river	d. roca
5. mountain	e. alto/a
	f. tierra

- **Provide the meaning of the following words:**
- winter:
- grow:
- plants:
- ice:
- nest:



## 2. Book Report

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

BOOK TITLE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

MY BOOK REPORT

WORDS \_\_\_\_\_

WHAT DID YOU LEARN? \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR OPINION \_\_\_\_\_

THE BOOK WAS  
EASY ☐  
OK ☐  
DIFFICULT ☐

MY FAVOURITE PAGE OR PART: \_\_\_\_\_

DID YOU LIKE IT?  
YES ☐  
NO ☐

### 3. LexTutor



Willkommen/bienvenue/welcome - y ¡Hola! - to

SAVERS : Hyps 1, 2; Cloze VP, N.Wd; ID-wd; RT; Flash; Click Miami UBI

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#### 3.1



Home > VocabProfilers > English

## Web VP Classic v.4

One-word VP-Classic NEW Jan 2018 - Corpus based school subject lists (MSVL - Middle School Vocab. Lists)

**Input method A**  
Type or paste short to medium size text (200,000 characters/35,000 words max = 60 secs) into window and click Submit\_window.

Title: Untitled | FREQ | VP-CLOZE | RESEARCH | TYPICAL PROFILES | AWL texts > APA | StatsCan

MAIN TEXT

DOGS/THE DOG'S SHOW  
BIG AND SMALL  
There are 200 million pet dogs around the world. Dogs can be different shapes and sizes. This dog is very tall. It is called an Irish Wolfhound. It can be 86 centimetres tall. This dog is big and strong, but it can be very friendly. Some small dogs are called toy dogs. This small dog is from Mexico. It is only 15 centimetres tall. This dog has got big eyes and big ears.

DIFFERENT DOGS  
There are many different kinds of dogs. Some dogs haven't got any hair. Some dogs have got long, straight hair. This dog has got curly, black hair. This dog is very old. It was a pet in Egypt a long time ago. Some dogs can run very fast. This dog is a greyhound. It has long legs, a thin face and small ears. This dog runs races.

THE DOG FAMILY  
All dogs eat meat. Wolves and foxes are in the dog family. In Britain, foxes sometimes live in towns and cities. The Arctic Wolf has got white fur in the winter. This fox has got red fur and a thick tail. This Arctic Wolf has got sharp teeth, thick fur and strong legs.

POST 2k  
● AWL  
● MSVL ?  
School subjects  
See lists  
DEMOS  
Sci Gr 4  
Hist Gr 5

USER/TECHNICAL LIST

SUB-OPTIONS  
● post\_AWL  
● overlap  
Demo  
Select

Demos: Isogram | Lit (1) (2) | Science (1) (2) | News (1) (2) | Speech (1) (2) | Rex M. | List AWL | Select | Count | No returns | SUBMIT\_Window

**Non-Lexical Proper Nouns:** Recategorize these words as 1k. [Type, paste, or dbl-click text area items]

None <Select > AND/OR all Capped non-initials

**Input method B**  
Upload is discontinued on VP-Classic. For larger files (up to 250,000 words) use VP-Compleat with "Classic" option checked.

Original VP by Heatley & Nation, VUW New Zealand & B. Laufer, U Haifa, Israel; AWL by A. Coxhead VUW; WebVP adapted by T. Cobb, UQAM Canada. [How to reference](#)

### 3.2

WEB VP OUTPUT FOR FILE: Untitled (3.29 kb)

Words recategorized by user as 1k items (proper nouns etc): NONE (total 0 tokens)

	Families	Types	Tokens	Percent			Words in text (tokens):	660
<b>K1 Words (1-1000):</b>	123	151	<b>530</b>	<b>80.30%</b>	<b>Current profile</b>		Different words (types):	218
Function:	...	...	(286)	(43.33%)			Type-token ratio:	0.33
Content:	...	...	(244)	(36.97%)	<b>%</b>	<b>Cumul.</b>	Tokens per type:	3.03
> Anglo-Sax	...	...	(201)	(30.45%)			Lex density (content words/total)	0.57
<b>K2 Words (1001-2000):</b>	35	36	<b>67</b>	<b>10.15%</b>	<b>80.30</b>	<b>80.30</b>	<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
> Anglo-Sax	...	...	(57)	(8.64%)	<b>10.15</b>	<b>90.45</b>	Tokens:	597
1k+2k			...	(90.45%)	<b>0.00</b>	<b>90.45</b>	Types:	187
<b>AWL Words:</b>				<b>0.00%</b>	<b>9.55</b>	<b>100.00</b>	Families:	158
> Anglo-Sax	...	...	()	(0.00%)			Tokens per family:	3.78
<b>Off-List Words:</b>	2	32	<b>63</b>	<b>9.55%</b>			Types per family:	1.18
	158+?	218	660	100%			Anglo-Sax Index:	%
							(A-Sax tokens + functors / onlist tokens)	%
							Greco-Lat/Fr-Cognate Index:	%
							(Inverse of above)	