

## IMPROVING NEW VOCABULARY LEARNING IN CONTEXT

*María Colombia Ovalle*

**T**he main purpose of this study is to help students increase their vocabulary learning in context because when learners participate in a special class with different activities and keep in mind the situation, they remember new words.

*The study was carried out in the action research method, and the activities provided to students encouraged learning and motivated them to practice English more.*

### Introduction

This project was applied at Santo Tomás, a private school of the Vereda Cerca de Piedra, in Chía to third grade students, from February to May, 2001.

After observing the students, their deficient vocabulary, and their fear of speaking, one of the abilities that the students must improve, is the semantic aspect in order to strengthen grammar, to build structures and have confidence in communicative competence.

Then, the main purpose in this study was to explore the use of new English new vocabulary in the students' outcomes, with the following research questions: The main question is: How can we help students increase vocabulary and language learning in context? The sub-questions are: What kinds of contexts are most effective to present vocabulary? What sort of

activities can we employ to make the learners practice new vocabulary?

In order to collect data, the sources used were direct class observation, a video recording and a questionnaire.

### Research Design

The development of the project was based on action research. It was carried out taking into account contexts and activities because happenings that occur inside the classroom promote interaction (Allwright and Bailey: 1991).

Because the lack of vocabulary was the problem, the proposal was a product of reflection on teaching, prompting changes to help my students (Richards and Lockhart: 1994).

According to Elliot (1991), the fundamental aim of action research is to improve practice rather than to produce knowledge. For that reason, the activities that could increase vocabulary were the aim in this study. Besides, when lessons are planned around a specific situation of real life, meaningful learning takes place (Charteris: 1991).

### Results

Through observation and sources, I noticed that guided activities promote confidence in

students and give them free opportunity to practice English.

The relevant activities carried out in a specific context, promote class work, giving students a chance to interact. Students prefer classes developed in a real context because they can practice new words.

The following was the questionnaire used as a data-collecting instrument. It was written in Spanish because of the English level of the students.

***This is the transcription  
of student Camilo Garzón.  
Used with permission.***

- 1) ¿Aprendiste hoy nuevas palabras?  
*SI. France, U.K., flag, states.*
  - 2) ¿El material usado te ayudó a comprender el tema?  
*SI. Aprendí más*
  - 3) ¿Cuál actividad te ayudó a aprender nuevas palabras?  
*Las banderas.*
  - 4) ¿Sientes que tu inglés ha progresado después de clase?  
*SI. Por qué? Porque me gusta.*
- Por favor, escribe otras observaciones o sugerencias que tú creas son relevantes para la clase...

Based on the results from this study we can conclude: 1. The kids felt that they had learned new words. 2. The material given to learners helped the class process. 3. Some of the students spoke English outside of class.

During the implementation, a limitation was detected with only YES or NO answers. Nevertheless, more than half of the course were

able to speak with simple structures using vocabulary without difficulties, showing fear more for personal characteristics than their attitude concerning English.

### **Conclusions**

To the main question, we can conclude that the real and unreal contexts created in the class environment helped make the learning process easier because students acquired meaningful knowledge.

To the first related question, we can say that special contexts that students experience in class make the learning process more effective. To the second related question, we must assure that a planned activity in a definite context contributes to understanding clearly what to do in class because when kids keep in mind the situation, they remember new words and practice them.

The children showed some progress in vocabulary learning and some kids liked to practice English outside class.

### **Pedagogical implications**

In the reality of the classroom, a big group (36 students) made it difficult to develop all activities because sometimes the kids' behavior was unruly, but the results were taken as some categories that helped the research.

According to the findings from the study, constantly reviewing the known vocabulary in the group is recommended because kids tend to forget the new vocabulary when it is not practiced often. Therefore, it's important to compare outcomes between periods of time during the course.

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Teachers must include activities in a special context as a condition of the real learning process because when the lesson is a stage to develop different contexts, learners are happier and the learning process becomes important.

### **References**

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