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FACULTY OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES
SCHOOL OF PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES-ENGLISH

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Integration of keyword mnemonic strategy for vocabulary learning in efl 10th-graders at a private school in the city of Guayaquil in the scholastic year 2025-2026.

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SUBMITTED IN FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR OBTAINING THE BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN EFL PEDAGOGY

PROJECT ADVISOR
Álvarez Guerrero, Arantxa Anahí, MEd.

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CERTIFICATION

We certify that this research project was presented by **Morales Mence, Denisse Faleria and Narváez Chalacán, Ana Belén** as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the **bachelor's degree in EFL Pedagogy.**

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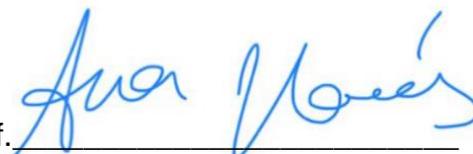
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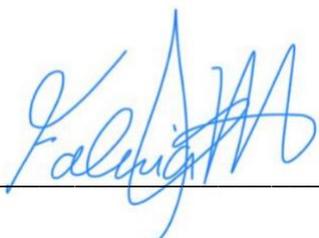## SCHOOL OF PEDAGOGY OF NATIONAL AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES-ENGLISH

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

Vocabulary constitutes the essential basis of communication. For this reason, students of a foreign language who cannot recognize the fundamental elements of a statement cannot actively participate in conversations. Within an EFL classroom, the scarcity of vocabulary tends to challenge the understanding of the target language and limits meaningful interaction. On the other hand, personal interest and motivation directly influence the learning process; therefore, it is necessary to apply didactic strategies that awaken curiosity and foster a positive attitude toward the study of a language. This project aims to analyse the process of vocabulary learning and examine how complementary tools, especially keyword mnemonics (KWM), can help overcome lexical difficulties among tenth-grade students in a private institution. The investigation was developed using a qualitative approach, whose instruments include structured and unstructured observation checklists and a teacher interview, with the purpose of tracking instructional strategies and student engagement. The results demonstrated the existence of a lexical gap that could be reduced using keyword mnemonics, which foster improved retention by creating multiple retrieval pathways through acoustic and visual stimuli. Based on these findings, a classroom intervention was designed, which includes a vocabulary booklet and monitoring procedures to evaluate its effectiveness.

***Keywords:** Keyword Mnemonic (KWM), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Vocabulary Learning, Memory, Engagement, Vocabulary Booklet.*

INTRODUCTION

English as a foreign language (EFL) refers to the learning and teaching of English to individuals who live in countries where English is not an official language. This process generally takes place in educational contexts. Central to this process is vocabulary, as it consists of the set of words that a student knows or uses to express ideas or communicate. In foreign language environments, vocabulary could be considered the basis of communication; without it, learners cannot participate in conversations nor identify the meaning of key elements in messages, regardless of their knowledge of syntax or morphology.

In Ecuador, the national curricula were designed to favour effective communication among students of diverse sociocultural contexts. This research focuses on a private institution in Guayaquil, affiliated with the Cambridge Education Partnership, which applies an inquiry-based methodology to promote critical thinking. Nevertheless, despite having these high academic standards, the classroom observations revealed a considerable vocabulary deficiency in 10th graders, where students were expected to complete activities at a B1 proficiency level.

This situation demanded the necessity to implement creative strategies for teaching and learning vocabulary. Sarıoğlu and Karatepe (2024) pointed out that field-related research demonstrates the positive impact of mnemonics, particularly the keyword mnemonic method, in the learning process of vocabulary in a foreign language. Various studies identify it to be more effective than other strategies, such as rote memorization, semantic mapping, root analysis, and sentence-context approaches. Other investigations highlight that this method result adequate and produces positive outcomes in EFL classes since students tend to perceive it as a motivational and attractive strategy. For this reason, this project was oriented towards the elaboration of a keyword mnemonic teaching booklet, its application through the keyword mnemonic, and its benefit in the lexical development of 10th-grade students.

Integration of Keyword Mnemonic Strategy for Vocabulary Learning in EFL 10th-graders at a Private School in the City of Guayaquil in the Scholastic Year 2025-2026

Problem Statement

The focus of this research is the integration of a keyword mnemonic into vocabulary learning for low-proficiency 10th-grade students at a private school in the city of Guayaquil, a high school located on Juan Tanca Marengo Avenue and Guillermo Cubillo Avenue in the northern area of Guayaquil. Their curriculum includes English instruction from early childhood, and it is strengthened by integrating subjects such as science from second to seventh grade and entrepreneurship starting in the first year of high school (Baccalaureate). The school is affiliated with the Cambridge educational partnership and works with International House, a prestigious centre that provides students with opportunities to take globally accepted Cambridge English exams. This guarantees that the school integrates its English teaching with the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference) and allows students to earn English certifications from grade three.

This private institution implements an inquiry-based learning methodology, which aims for the individuals to construct their own thought processes by using induction and deduction reasoning as well as the development of metacognitive skills, which aligns with the institution's program "Desarrollo de Habilidades del Pensamiento" designed by Dr. Margarita A. de Sanchez, that promotes the development of students' critical and cognitive thinking skills.

During the 2025-2026 school year, through non-intrusive, unstructured observations, it was found that 10th-grade students from the basic level demonstrated limited vocabulary. This issue was first observed on June 30, 2025, when students in a 10th-grade class frequently demonstrated insufficient production of spoken and written ideas and a deficient ability to understand texts; these problems are likely due to their low vocabulary level. Furthermore,

based on the preliminary observation carried out during the practicum, students rely on literal Spanish-to-English translation which often hindered the accurate initial learning of new English words, leading to confusion with false cognates and an overall delay in building their independent English lexicon. According to Suryanto et al. (2021), "the process of communicating requires vocabulary to represent ideas, messages or ideas to be conveyed, students who have good vocabulary mastery can be sure that it will be easier to communicate." (p.9)

Consequently, when teachers apply effective strategies, they can strengthen students' independent lexical development and better support their progression from A2 to B1 on the CEFR.

For this reason, the necessity of research that not only identifies lexical deficiency but also proposes an innovative pedagogical strategy, such as keyword mnemonics that rely on dual coding theory, is justified to describe the influence of low proficiency on vocabulary learning among 10th-grade EFL students. As vocabulary is necessary for developing a good English level, suitable vocabulary-learning tools are needed to develop language skills.

This research will describe how this specific strategy impacts vocabulary learning and teaching for low-proficiency students at a private school in the city of Guayaquil during the 2025-2026 academic year.

JUSTIFICATION

According to Schmitt (2010), vocabulary plays an important role in the acquisition of any language, regardless of whether it is a foreign or a second language. Rodriguez and Diaz (2025) state that vocabulary knowledge leads to developing productive skills (speaking and writing) and receptive skills (listening and reading), and could be considered an indicator of mastery of a language. Nonetheless, some learners face struggles with engagement, which directly affects their vocabulary learning, limiting their reception and production of English. This is the case among tenth graders at a private school in the city of Guayaquil.

This study, which investigates mnemonic strategies as a tool, aims to motivate tenth graders to engage in L2 vocabulary learning. According to Ellis (1995, as cited in Kurniarahman, 2023), "EFL students who use mnemonics have an easier time memorizing a set of vocabulary items, storing them in either their short-term or long-term memory, and bringing those items to mind when needed" (p.11).

This study will be useful for EFL teachers and students, as the results can serve as a guide for teaching EFL vocabulary to students whose mother tongue is Spanish (L1). In addition, it will give teachers a useful option or strategy to try when seeking practical solutions to help students retrieve EFL vocabulary more confidently and effectively. Moreover, the ideas and suggestions from this project can support other educators and researchers investigating how high school students develop their EFL vocabulary.

This private school could find this research beneficial, as it will serve as a guide to improve the vocabulary learning of tenth graders, demonstrating how the use of the keyword mnemonic strategy could influence their EFL vocabulary learning.

Research Question

- How does the integration of the keyword mnemonic strategy address the identified needs in vocabulary learning for EFL low proficiency 10th-grade students at this private institution during the 2025-2026 school year?

- What teaching strategies are used to develop vocabulary among 10th-grade EFL students at the private institution?

General Objectives

To explore how the integration of keyword mnemonic into vocabulary instruction can help overcome learning challenges among low proficiency 10th-grade EFL students at a private school in the city of Guayaquil during the scholastic year 2025–2026.

Specific Objectives

- To analyze the vocabulary teaching strategies used by teachers in EFL classes.

- To describe the factors that contribute to lexical gaps for low proficiency 10th-grade students.

- To propose the use of the keyword mnemonic strategy for the development of vocabulary among 10th-grade students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

According to Quimosing (2022), foreign language learning refers to the acquisition of a non-native language in a classroom setting, and learners do not use it in their daily lives. Language exposure is lower than for a second language (L2), often referred to as a foreign language. On the other hand, Collins Dictionary (2025) defines English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as the learning and teaching of English to people whose first language is not English and who reside in a country where English is not an official language.

In 2016, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education designed an English language curriculum for students in Educación General Básica (2nd to 10th grades) and Bachillerato General Unificado (1st to 3rd years) whose L1 is not English. This curriculum was created with the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students in mind, recognizing that not all learners are L1 Spanish speakers and that multiple levels of bilingualism exist across communities. The curriculum provided a justification and a framework for learning English, with relevant production and practices to facilitate educational inclusion regardless of L1. It aims to support and motivate the development of Ecuadorian students in communicating effectively in English in today's globalized world.

According to Sugimoto et al. (2006), as cited in Al-Munawwarah (2018), different factors, such as motivation, are considered determinants of learning English as a foreign or second language, and internal factors, particularly personal relevance and attitude toward learning English, were the second primary factors that influenced students' learning activities. For this reason, EFL must be presented in a way that engages learners.

Vocabulary and its importance

Vocabulary is the total number of words that make up a language, representing all words that someone knows, learn, or uses (Longman Dictionary, 2025). Hatch and Brown (1995), as cited in Chekhab (2016), explain that vocabulary is a set of expressions in a specific language that learners can use, representing the amount of word knowledge a Foreign Language learner might use to communicate ideas. Chekhab (2016) states that in Foreign Language classrooms, the lack of vocabulary knowledge remains a factor that may delay learners' understanding of a target language.

Nation (2001) defines vocabulary in the context of language development as a key aspect of the lexical dimension, along with formulaic expressions, word patterns, and lexical bundles. It is understood as one of the sub-goals within a language development program, classified specially under the language item's goal for language learning. Furthermore, expressing that knowing a word includes not only its formal aspects and meaning, but also its use. In other words, vocabulary knowledge requires knowing a word's formal aspects (denotation and part of speech) and its meaning, as well as being able to use it accurately in context.

Vocabulary is the basis of communication. If an EFL learner does not acquire it, they would not be able to participate in conversations by failing to recognize the meaning of key words used by those addressing them (Krashen and Terrell, 1985). Therefore, if a student knows the morphology and syntax of a phrase yet ignores the meaning, they will be unable to participate in a conversation.

As previously mentioned, vocabulary is crucial for the learning process of a foreign language. Krashen and Terrell (1985) state that we acquire morphology and syntax because we understand the meaning of utterances. Learning, then, depends on the input being comprehensible, and comprehension depends on the ability to recognize the meaning of key elements in the utterance. In other words, learning will not occur without an understanding of vocabulary.

Vocabulary components

Paul Nation, in his work Learning Vocabulary in Another Language (2001), proposes that the mastery of a word involves three comprehensive components: Form, Meaning, and Use, which offer a way to model various aspects of vocabulary knowledge.

Form relates to the physical properties of a word. Including both the written form, which consists on the recognition of words when reading, knowing how to write them, and spelling with precision, and also the morphological part which involves how to break down words into prefixes, roots and suffixes, and the spoken form, which implies the receptive capacity to identify how words sound and also the productive ability to articulate and pronounce words accurately, including intonation and adequate syllabic accent.

On a second aspect, Meaning addresses the semantic relation between the form of the word and the concept that it represents. Implying a connection between form and meaning, a fundamental link that allows access to meaning when a word is being seen or heard, or to search for an adequate word to express an idea, allowing one to grasp words' underlying concept and reference, meaning multiple meanings. Additionally, knowledge of associations is required, which refers to the relationships between the term and others in the lexicon, such as synonyms, antonyms, or hierarchically related terms.

Finally, the use is defined as the functionality of the words inside the sentence structure and the discourse in general. This includes knowing the grammatical functions, meaning the syntactic pattern in a word (grammar category and dependent structure), and how to correctly use it during production. A sub-area of great importance is the knowledge of collocations, which implies knowing that some combinations of words frequently occur together in a language. Constraints, on the other hand, imply when, where, and how frequently it is appropriate to use a word based on factors like formality and register. These expressions are fluent and native.

In essence, knowing a word fully is a cumulative process that requires developing competence across all these receptive (understanding) and productive (using) aspects of its form, meaning, and use.

EFL Vocabulary Learning Process

Siyanova-Chanturia and Webb (2016) mention that learning vocabulary in an L1 and L2 is not fundamentally different; however, one of the important ways in which L1 and L2 vocabulary learning differs is the rate of vocabulary growth. In the L1 learning context, the amount of regular input is immense, allowing for much of the vocabulary to be learnt incidentally. In contrast, the smaller amount of regular input in the L2 context means that the opportunities for learning new vocabulary items are limited, with relatively few words being acquired.

The Involvement Load Hypothesis (ILH), proposed by Hulstijn and Laufer (2001), suggests that the key to incidental learning and long-lasting memory of vocabulary in a Foreign Language (L2) lies in the depth of mental processing required for a task. In other words, the main idea is that the more "mental work" is needed to perform a task regarding a word, the better it will remain in memory. This mental work or Involvement load can be measured in 3 components: need, search, and evaluation. Need is a motivational factor related to the necessity to process a word (non-cognitive). Search, the cognitive performance to find a word's meaning or form, and Evaluation, the cognitive process of analysis to know if a word or phrase fits according to the context. Therefore, tasks that score a higher involvement index by demanding a greater effort will lead to significantly greater retention than tasks with a lower load, thereby serving as a robust framework for designing effective vocabulary instruction.

The learning of vocabulary is commonly understood through the conceptual distinction between receptive and productive knowledge. Nation (2001) notes that these terms are used synonymously with passive for receptive and active for productive learning.

1. **Receptive Vocabulary**

Nation (2001) establishes that receptive vocabulary learning involves comprehending the language input received, typically through listening and reading activities. The main mechanism revolves around the perception of the form of a word and retrieving its meaning.

Compared to learning productive vocabulary, learning receptive vocabulary is easier, because receptive vocabulary learning is practiced more in everyday classroom learning than productive vocabulary, and learners usually need to understand less precise aspects of a word's form when it comes to recognition than when it comes to production For example, receptive knowledge of the phrasal verb look after includes the ability to understand the word and its form when it is presented in writing or speech, the ability to recognize the word in its written form when reading, the ability to grasp the central idea of the word in varied contexts, and the knowledge of the word's grammatical role and its typical collocations.

2. **Productive Vocabulary**

On the other hand, productive vocabulary learning involves generating language forms by speaking and writing to convey messages to others. The mechanism for this process relies on wanting to express a meaning and retrieving and producing the appropriate written or spoken form (Nation, 2001).

According to Nation (2001), productive vocabulary learning requires more effort and practice than receptive learning, meaning the knowledge of a word form must be precise and flawless. This learning process occurs with meaning-focused output activities like speaking and writing, where the knowledge of students is strengthened by focusing on words in a way that learners do not during listening and reading.

For a phrasal verb like look after, productive knowledge includes being able to say it with correct pronunciation, being able to write it with a correct spelling, being able to produce the

word in different contexts, and to express the meaning accurately, being able to use the word in an original sentence and being able to use it or not to suit the context.

Vocabulary Learning Strategies

According to Cohen (1987), the strategies for learning vocabulary constitute fundamental elements within the general process of learning a language, since the purpose is to facilitate the incorporation of the acquisition and use of vocabulary. Research in this area suggests that the selection, application, and efficacy of said strategies depend on the task, the profile, and the learning context.

Given that, in foreign language learning contexts, opportunities for target-language input, output, and interaction are limited, it becomes essential for vocabulary learning to employ motivating and effective learning strategies. (Tseng and Schmitt, 2008, as cited in Ghalebi et al, 2020).

According to Ghalebi et al. (2020), one of the first challenges a foreign language learner faces is how to memorize a large number of new words. Developing independent vocabulary skills requires a high level of motivation from the learner and is a dynamic process that involves multiple factors and the practice of various abilities. The types of strategies students use often depend on the individual learner; however, in the classroom, teachers can explicitly demonstrate their own strategies, remind students to use them, and provide opportunities to practice in order to encourage students' independent vocabulary-building skills.

Cohen (1987) described several methods for memorizing new vocabulary, such as, rote repetition, which involves repeating the word and its meaning until it is memorized; structural analysis, which means breaking down the word into its root, affixes, and inflections to understand its meaning better; semantic strategies, which include finding synonyms to create a network of interconnected concepts, grouping words by topic or verb type, or relating the word to the sentence where it was found or to a different sentence; and using mnemonic

devices, which create a mental connection between an unfamiliar foreign word and its translation through an associative mediator.

Memory

Memory has often been compared to a computer system, described by the information-processing model as progressing through the stages of encoding, storage, and retrieval (May et al., 2013). Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) further conceptualized memory as comprising three distinct types, sensory, short-term, and long-term, which reflect the phases through which information passes. Each type of memory has distinct characteristics; for instance, sensory memory operates unconsciously, short-term memory can retain only a limited amount of information, and long-term memory is able to store information in a virtually limitless manner (Zlotnik and Vansintjan, 2019).

 Multi-store Model of Memory

Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968) proposed the Atkinson-Shiffrin Modal Model of Memory, also known as the multi-store model, which states that the incoming information is first collected in the sensory memory, where it remains for a period of time, and it passes to the short-term memory, from where it can be transferred to the long-term memory. The transfer of information from one storage to another can suffer decay if certain control processes are not present.

The way a stimulus input is processed and, thus, the quality of the resulting memory depends heavily on control processes, which are strategies, coding techniques, or mnemonics selected by the subject. These processes determine the nature and amount of information transferred from the Short-Term Store (STS) to the Long-Term Store (LTS). (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968).

Sensory memory

This part, referred to as sensory registers or buffers, is the first stage of input, where new sensory data is held for a short amount of time, and is then lost due to decay (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968).

There are different stores for different senses, for example, iconic, echoic, haptic, gustatory, and olfactory. Each of these registers receives and manages the information that enters from one of the five senses. The information that enters sensory memory is raw, unprocessed, and has a large capacity, but it is held there for only a few milliseconds. Therefore, only when we focus our attention on a stimulus can it be transferred to the next level: short-term memory (Finley, 2024).
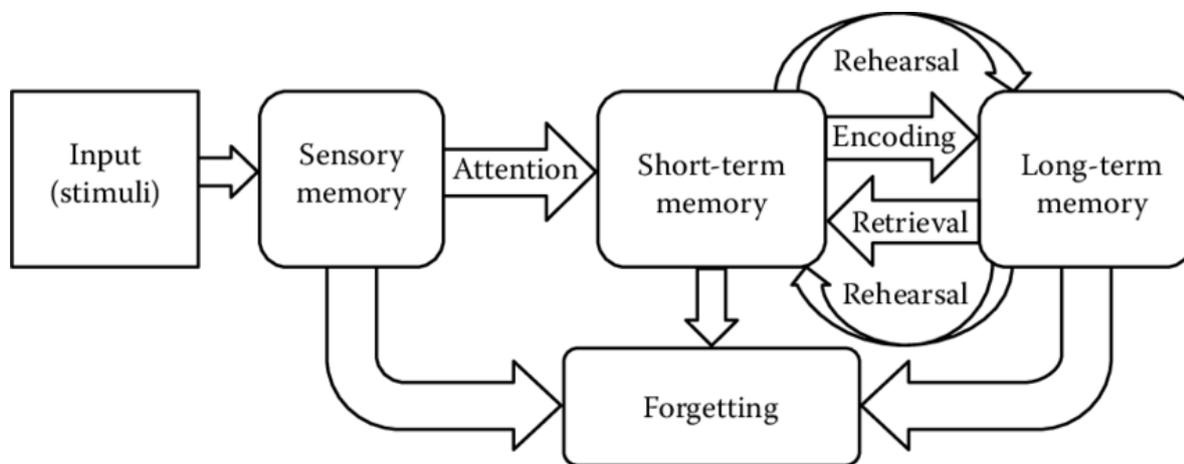
Figure 1 The Multi-Store Model of Memory flowchart. Retrieved from Atkinson, R. C., and Shiffrin, R. M. (1968).

Finley (2024) also notes that the process of visual registration, or iconic memory, involves a very brief, complete, and unprocessed copy of all environmental information entering through the senses, and is fairly well understood. As demonstrated by Sperling (1960, as cited in Finley, 2024), information held here decays within a period of several hundred milliseconds. For example, a person may still perceive the colors and shapes of fireworks even after they have disappeared. This process relies on the primary visual cortex in the occipital lobe, which captures a high-resolution snapshot of the environment to help interpret visual details quickly.

Another sense that is also studied is auditory sensory memory, also called echoic memory. It allows sounds to linger for a few seconds after they occur, giving individuals time to process spoken words or melodies. For instance, the tune of a favorite song may continue in a person's mind even after the music stops. This type of memory is supported by the auditory cortex in the temporal lobe, ensuring that auditory information can be understood before it fades.

According to Greenberg and Roscoe (1988), echoic memory is the auditory form of sensory memory. It allows sounds to be retained for a few seconds after they are heard. This temporary storage lets us piece together sounds, like phonemes, into words and phrases, which is essential for comprehending spoken language. Echoic memory plays an important role in listening comprehension and successful communication, especially in languages we are learning. If someone has poorer echoic memory, they may have more difficulty understanding spoken information, particularly in a foreign language.

Working (short-term) memory

Short-term, or working, memory has a limited capacity and allows the temporary recall of information. It typically processes information for about 10–15 seconds before that information either transfers into long-term storage or decays. Although this system is relatively stable, as Figure 1 demonstrates, it often requires additional effort, such as rehearsal or meaningful encoding, to prevent information from fading. Working memory is closely associated with the prefrontal cortex, which plays a key role in holding and manipulating information needed for ongoing tasks and decision-making (Ciolek and Lee, 2020).

Working memory (WM) is a short-term memory system that we use to store and process the information about which we are currently thinking. Unlike sensory memory, which has a large capacity and can briefly register everything we see or hear, working memory is much more limited. Only a portion of the information captured by sensory memory, such as iconic or echoic memory, is selected for processing in working memory. While sensory memory operates automatically and unconsciously, working memory has been defined as the current content of

consciousness. It functions like a kind of mental whiteboard or desktop, allowing us to understand, retrieve, and manipulate the information needed to carry out cognitive tasks in real time (May et al., 2013).

According to Baddeley and Hitch (1974), working memory (WM) is a limited-capacity cognitive system that temporarily maintains and manipulates information, which is fundamental for complex thinking and everyday mental functioning. Unlike short-term memory, which primarily stores information for a brief period, working memory actively integrates perception with memory and coordinates attention with action. Thanks to this system, people can carry out tasks such as mental calculation, verbal reasoning, language comprehension, and long-term learning. The most influential theoretical model used to explain its functioning is the multicomponent model proposed by Baddeley and Hitch (1974), which identifies four interrelated components: the central executive, responsible for directing attention, regulating cognitive processes, and coordinating the other systems; the phonological loop, which maintains and processes verbal information and speech sounds, and is key for vocabulary learning; the visuospatial sketchpad, responsible for storing and handling visual and spatial information, such as shapes and locations; and the episodic buffer, which integrates information from the different subsystems, long-term memory, and perception into coherent, conscious representations. Taken together, the efficiency of working memory, measured through tasks that combine storage and processing, is a strong predictor of performance in complex cognitive activities such as comprehension and advanced reasoning (Baddeley, 2007, 2012).
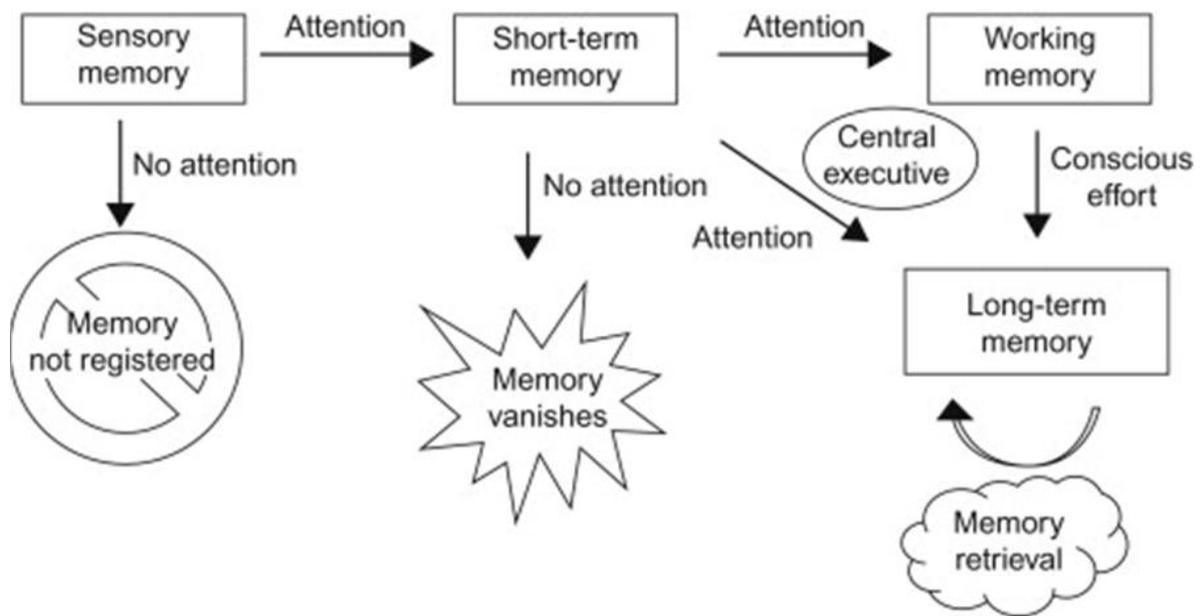
Figure 2 Progression of memory flowchart. Retrieved from Atkinson, R. C., and Shiffrin, R. M. (1968).

Long-term memory

Long-term memory is often thought of as a storehouse where information is kept and later retrieved when needed. However, it is increasingly recognized that memory does not function only as a storage depot, but rather as a representational process in which new information is encoded both literally and in terms of its relationship and compatibility with prior schemas that already exist in the mind (Koriat et al., 2000, as cited in Lindell, 2014).

Unlike the sensory register and the short-term store, information stored in the LTS does not decay and become lost in the same manner; it is considered relatively permanent (Atkinson and Shiffrin, 1968). Its capacity appears to be essentially unlimited, constrained only by the amount of information an individual can encode in a human lifespan. Similarly, its duration seems limited only by how long a person lives.

Information held in working memory can be encoded and stored in long-term memory to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the encoding strategies used, such as elaborative

processing or rote rehearsal. Likewise, information stored in long-term memory can be retrieved and reactivated in working memory when needed (Finley, 2024)

Long-term memory can be divided into implicit (or procedural) and explicit (or declarative) systems. Implicit memory operates unconsciously and allows us to carry out skills, habits, and automatic actions, such as tying our shoes, riding a bicycle, or typing on a keyboard; these abilities are acquired through practice and repetition and usually remain stable, although they can weaken if they are no longer practiced. Explicit memory, on the other hand, involves conscious, verbalizable recall and is made up of episodic memory, which stores personal experiences along with their context and emotions (such as remembering a birthday or a trip), and semantic memory, which stores general knowledge, meanings, and facts, such as knowing that Paris is the capital of France or the meaning of a word. Together, implicit memory enables automatic action, while explicit memory makes it possible to remember both personal experiences and knowledge about the world. (Ciolek and Lee, 2020).

Levels of Processing

The information-processing model proposes that long-term memory functions as a system that encodes, stores, and retrieves information, similar to a computer. According to this model, the way information is encoded is crucial, as it determines how easily it can be retrieved later. Several factors influence this encoding process, including the level of processing applied to the information (shallow or deep), the timing and distribution of practice (massed or spaced practice), the way a person organizes the information, the degree of personal relevance during learning, the distinctiveness of the material, and the use of assessments or tests during the learning process (May et al., 2013).

The concept of level of processing originates from the Depth-of-Processing Theory, proposed by Craik and Lockhart (1972), which holds that deep processing is necessary in order to retain new information. According to this approach, information is processed along a hierarchical continuum that ranges from a shallow analysis focused on the physical features of the stimulus

to a deep analysis focused on its meaning. Shallow processing or maintenance rehearsal can occur in two main ways: structural and phonemic. In structural processing, attention is focused on the physical aspects of the information, such as whether the letters are in uppercase or lowercase, the color of the print, or the typeface. In phonemic processing, the emphasis is on sound, for example, determining whether one word rhymes with another. Both types rely on sensory features such as shape, color, sound, or visual details, and may even include mechanical tasks like counting the number of closed spaces in the letters of a word. According to the levels-of-processing framework, this type of analysis does not go in-depth into the meaning of the material, so the information is not encoded effectively for long-term retrieval. As a result, the memories formed tend to be weak and short-lived and are associated mainly with short-term memory. In contrast, deep or elaborative rehearsal involves understanding the meaning, recognizing patterns, and analyzing the implications of the information; for instance, judging whether a word is pleasant, whether it makes sense in a sentence, or what its meaning is, leading to richer, more durable memories and a higher level of retention (May et al., 2013; Craik and Lockhart, 1972).

The levels-of-processing theory represents an improvement over the Atkinson and Shiffrin model, as it explains that the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory does not depend solely on repetition but also on the type of processing carried out. In this sense, elaborative rehearsal is much more effective for recall than simple maintenance rehearsal. This approach marked an important shift in memory research by showing that encoding is not a simple or automatic process, but a complex and active one, which broadened the conception of long-term memory from a mere passive store to a dynamic processing system (Craik, 2016).

According to Cohen (1987), mnemonic strategies support learning because they require deep cognitive processing, which strengthens and prolongs memory traces, as noted by Craik and Lockhart. The recall of words largely depends on the level of processing with which they are studied: the deeper the cognitive elaboration, the greater the integration between prior knowledge and new information in long-term memory, whereas shallow processing is

associated with greater forgetting (Siriganjanavong, 2013). Methods such as the Keyword Method (KWM) are especially effective because they promote extensive elaboration through dual coding, by combining verbal and visual information. This method requires associating a new word with a familiar word that sounds similar and creating a mental image that links that word to its meaning, which involves greater cognitive effort. As a result, richer and more durable representations are formed, increasing long-term retention and retrieval.

Schema Theory

Barkley (2010) pointed out that the only way learning can be meaningful is when new information is integrated with existing information in the learner's mind, stimulating a restructuring of the cognitive frameworks that the learner uses to construct meaning. This idea can be further illustrated through the concept of schema. Xiao (2024) refers to schema as the mental structures of individuals that organize and interpret the generic concepts that form the basis of reality. In the memory process, new material is integrated into pre-existing schemas, which means that new information is combined with what is already stored in the mind. Therefore, the learning of vocabulary takes time, as it is a process in which new word schemas are integrated to the knowledge that has been organized previously. Similarly, mnemonics often require forming a mental image that connects the keyword with the meaning of the new word, thereby creating a new content schema for that word.

Stages of Cognitive Development

Cognitive development, as proposed by Piaget (1969), provides a robust explanatory framework for understanding how mental capacities develop progressively and how they influence the use of learning strategies. Each stage of cognitive development is characterized by specific mental structures that determine the types of operations learners can perform and the strategies they can use effectively. In this context, mnemonics can be understood as

cognitive tools whose applicability and effectiveness depend directly on the developmental stage in which the learner finds themselves.

During the preoperational stage, the acquisition of symbolic function is one of the most relevant cognitive achievements. This function allows individuals to mentally represent absent objects, events, or ideas through signs and symbols. Thanks to this capacity, thought expands toward a more abstract field of representation. In terms of learning, this symbolic ability is the basis for understanding that one element can represent another, as occurs when a word or image is used to evoke a different meaning. Simple mnemonic strategies that involve basic associations between words and images rely on this representational capacity, as they require the learner to establish symbolic links between elements that are not directly related (Piaget and Inhelder, 2000).

However, mere symbolic representation does not guarantee the effective use of more complex cognitive strategies. It is in the stage of concrete operations that the capacities for mental manipulation, transformation, and anticipation develop, allowing the learner to operate actively on mental representations. From around seven or eight years of age, children stop forming predominantly static mental images and acquire the ability to imagine movements, changes, and dynamic relationships between elements. This cognitive advance is fundamental for learning strategies that require richer elaborations, such as those mnemonics based on interactive images, in which the components of the association are related through actions or concrete situations. In this sense, mnemonics illustrate how operational understanding enables deeper processing of information (Piaget and Inhelder, 2000).

To conclude, the operational phase signifies the advancement of thinking that is abstract, hypothetical and structured. Learners at this stage can reason about what is possible, consider other options, and reflect on the awareness of the processes in thinking (Madanagopal, 2020).

Dual Coding Theory

One of the most prominent theories of learning is Dual Coding Theory (DCT), first formulated by Allan Paivio in 1971. Paivio proposes that humans behave and react through mental representations that consist of multiple associative networks. DCT suggests that both the verbal and non-verbal (or imaginal) systems generate and react to psychological phenomena through a complex interplay.

The verbal system involves the use of arbitrary symbolic codes (e.g., words) to represent concrete events and abstract concepts, and usually sequentially processes information. On the other hand, the non-verbal system uses images that relate to sensorimotor experiences- visual, auditory, motor, or visceral- which can be processed simultaneously and manipulated dynamically in a spatial context. Both systems are connected through referential links between words and images and through internal associations within each system, which allow activation to spread and meaning to be integrated.

In the field of education, Clark and Paivio (1991) describe that in the case of content high in imaginal value, the concrete and the high imaginal value are more understandable and memorable when compared to the abstract, since learning is aided by both the dual verbal and imaginal coding, and the organization that is provided by the formation of composite images.

This theory underpins effective instructional strategies such as the use of concrete examples, illustrations, image-based mnemonics, diagrams, and summaries, and it also provides a framework for understanding cognitive evaluation, emotion, and motor skills by showing that cognition, affect, and action share common representational mechanisms.

A psychological theory that explains image-based mnemonic strategies like Keyword mnemonics is Dual Coding Theory by Paivio (1971). This theory posits that both the verbal and the visual systems in the mind can be used to process and store information when learning, and both systems work complementarily.

According to Paivio (1971), cognitive processing is organized into two differentiated subsystems: the analog code and the symbolic code. The analog code specializes in the representation and processing of non-verbal objects and events, preserving the essential characteristics of stimuli through mental images. In contrast, the symbolic code is responsible for language processing, allowing the formation of mental representations of linguistic symbols, such as words (Cuevas and Dawson, 2018, as cited in Cancino et al., 2021).

From this perspective, learning based only on verbal encoding may be less effective because it relies on a single cognitive system. This may explain the problems with remembering information in traditional methods like rote repetition. In contrast, the Keyword mnemonic uses both verbal and visual stimuli at the same time, creating a stronger and more meaningful memory of the content learned (Campos, 2013).

Consequently, Dual Coding Theory suggests that learning through both a conceptual and linguistic approach leads to more effective and durable learning. This is due to the fact that the reinforcing effect of memory through verbal and visual codes increases the recall and recognition of words in a target language.

Mnemonics

Mnemonics are any device or technique to aid memory, with the main purpose of creating an artificial structure that incorporates unfamiliar ideas or a set of dissociated ideas that are hard to recall and is designed so that its parts are mutually suggestive (Britannica, 2025). According to Higbee (2001), the word mnemonic derives from Mnemosyne, the ancient Greek goddess of memory, meaning "aiding the memory" and referring to any technique, method, or system used to improve memory. Typically, mnemonics refer to memory aids that most people consider rather unusual or artificial. Higbee (2001) explains that mnemonics can sometimes be referred to as memory tricks, used in place of "real" memorizing.

Mnemonic techniques work by implementing the basic principles of learning and memory (organization, association, attention, and meaningfulness). A key feature of mnemonics is that they impose meaning on material that is not otherwise organized or meaningful, and is the kind of material that has best shown results for. Rather, logical and meaningful material would not be needed for applying mnemonics.

Modern memory research, as presented by Putnam (2015), has shown that mnemonics can be powerful learning tools in certain contexts, such as remembering a list of concrete objects, numbers, spelling words, or new vocabulary words. Higbee (2001) explains that mnemonics can be categorized based on whether they primarily use words or mental images for association, suggesting that a further distinction can be made between mnemonic techniques and mnemonic systems.

Mnemonic techniques and Systems.

Mnemonics, as previously explained, are memory aids that can be categorized by their modality (visual or verbal) and systems (Higbee, 2001)

1. Mnemonic Modalities

Mnemonic techniques are usually single-purpose, used for remembering specific facts. These techniques are easier to generate and use spontaneously, and can be categorized by sensational modality (visual or verbal) that could be established for associations:

1.1 Verbal Mnemonics

Verbal Mnemonics focus on the use of words or sounds to encode information. Inside this category, we can find a sub-category of First-letter mnemonics, like Acronyms, which are words formed from the first letters of the item, and Acrostic, a series of words or verses whose first letters form a word or phrase. Another verbal technique is the Keyword mnemonic, which often begins verbally by constructing a meaningful, concrete substitute word (keyword) to

represent an abstract or foreign idea. Finally, rhymes, songs, and stories are used to impose meaning and structure on unrelated items.

1.2 Visual-imagery Mnemonics

These mnemonic techniques use visual imagery or mental pictures to create associations and promote retention of information. This technique requires the creation of mental and interactive images, which are encouraged to be as exaggerated, unusual, and bizarre as possible, to associate new terms.

The keyword mnemonic is considered both verbal and visual because its first step includes finding a concrete substitute word to represent a foreign word, and the second step usually incorporates visual imagery to associate the substitute word with the meaning of the original word. For example, an EFL learner could use the Keyword mnemonic to learn the word "Peak", meaning "Cima" in Spanish. The keyword for Peak will be Pico (beak) for their similarities in sound. The imagery could be a giant bird's beak sitting right on top of a mountain.

2.   Mnemonic systems

Mnemonic systems are described by Higbee (2001) as more general-purpose mnemonics created to be used repeatedly, with an unlimited set of information. They involve building a mental file of previously memorized cues that exist independently of the material to be remembered. Because they are less likely to be self-generated, mnemonic systems often require instruction and practice. The three most used and studied systems are: the Loci System, which involves the association of elements within a mental location (e.g., house), where retrieval occurs by taking a mental walk through the locations. The Peg system, on the other hand, uses pre-memorized concrete nouns, called pegwords, which correspond meaningfully with numbers (e.g., words that rhyme with the numbers, like "one–bun"). The pegwords serve as mental hooks by associating a visual image of the new item with the pegword. Finally, the Phonetic System, which is a complex yet sophisticated system, translates numbers to consonant sounds to create a broad numeric archive.

Use of keyword mnemonics for learning vocabulary

The Keyword mnemonic method (KWM) is an efficient two-step procedure for the acquisition of vocabulary in a foreign language (Raugh and Atkinson, 1975). This method works by establishing a chain of two links, mediated by a keyword, to connect a foreign word with its translation into English. The first stage is the acoustic link, where the learner associates the spoken foreign word with a "keyword" in English that sounds like a part of it. The second stage is the imagery link, which implies creating a mental image of the keyword, interacting graphically with the foreign word. This two-stage method demonstrated noticeable results (Raugh and Atkinson, 1975).

According to Cohen (1987), several studies have confirmed that the keyword method (KWM) can facilitate recall of vocabulary items when students define the word if the items are well-integrated in semantic memory.

As previously mentioned, an image or sound association needs to be developed with each new L2 word to be learned, with a word from the first language. Hence, this technique is used in both the mental and the acoustic associative steps. Nation (1990) cited the keyword technique and stated that students have to do something peculiar with the words. He also pointed out that the more the learners try to be creative, the more the technique is likely to be effective. In the work of Taheri and Davoudi (2016), it is stated that when creating associations, it can be with L1 and the new L2 word, or with L2 and the known L2 words.

According to Cohen (1987), the mental process resulting from the use of this technique implies a profound cognitive analysis of the word that is being learned, which has the effect of strengthening and prolonging the persistence of memory. Taheri and Davoudi (2016) support the impact of KWM by referencing Dual Coding Theory (DCT), claiming that the success of this method resides in the capacity of combining a verbal and a visual/imaginary connection (acoustic similarity and interactive image), which significantly improves the mental capacity of students to retain the meaning of words.

Previous studies on vocabulary Learning

Mnemonics that integrate dual coding, such as the Keyword Mnemonics (KWM), have been proven to increase EFL learners' lexicon through previous research papers and studies.

Fasih et al. (2018) carried out a quasi-experimental study to evaluate the impact of an intervention based on the learning of academic vocabulary with mnemonic techniques. The authors based their study on the hypothesis that the keyword technique could significantly improve students' comprehension and acquisition of vocabulary. To obtain data, pre-tests and post-tests were applied before and after the interventions, focusing on topics related to the Cold War. The results demonstrated that students who participated in the interventions obtained statistically significant results in their performance.

Along the same lines, Mahdi and Gubeily (2018), whose experiment demonstrated that the students who learned vocabulary words with unusual images obtained a significantly higher score in comparison to those who used common images. In addition, students who studied with common images outperformed those who learned vocabulary with traditional methods. These results indicated that mnemonic strategies offer new possibilities to improve vocabulary learning.

These empirical findings are directly supported by the Dual Coding Theory, which provides the theoretical backbone for the effectiveness of mnemonic strategies. According to Craik and Pavio (2004), the Dual Coding Theory is central to mnemonic strategies because it explains that by deliberately encoding new vocabulary through both the sound/word (verbal) and the image/picture (visual), the learner creates multiple pathways for memory retrieval, ensuring that if one pathway fails, the other remains accessible. A study by Campos (2013) remarks that the dual coding mechanism is cited as the reason why keyword mnemonic is effective; methods restricted to verbal coding alone, such as the rote repetition method, result in poorer recall because only one coding system is involved.

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Effectiveness in Retention, Motivation, and Classroom Application

Further on, mnemonics techniques, such as Keyword strategy has been researched in retention and motivation, as the paper found in the International Journal of English Linguistics titled "The Effect of Mnemonic Keyword Strategy Instruction on Vocabulary Retention of Students with Learning Disabilities" by Al-Khawaldeh and Al-Khasawneh (2019) stated that the keyword strategy is important for enhancing vocabulary learning and retention among students, including students with learning disabilities. *The implementation of this strategy, which included various methods for introducing new vocabulary such as interactive pictures, visual presentations, and sound files, contributed to students' engagement and activation of prior knowledge, thereby increasing their motivation to learn.* This is further exemplified by the study titled "The application of mnemonic strategies to improve EFL students' aptitude for vocabulary by Thảo (2022) concluded that mnemonic strategies, particularly the Keyword Method (KWM), are a highly effective and appropriate pedagogical tool for significantly improving EFL students' aptitude (ability and motivation) for vocabulary acquisition and retention compared to traditional rote learning.

Regarding classroom implementation, Cancino and Gatica (2021) concluded that pictorials assist students in creating mnemonic associations of L2 vocabulary and other salient terms. For the purpose of learning unfamiliar words, spoken prompt instructions to form mental imagery can be as effective as providing actual imagery. For the Keyword Mnemonic technique to be most effective in EFL classrooms, educators need to make sure students form mental imagery in connection with new lexical items.

The article "Mnemonic Strategies: Evidence-Based Practice and Practice-Based Evidence" by Scruggs et al. (2010) points out that mnemonic strategies have been validated in numerous experimental investigations. Additionally, numerous teachers have applied them in their classes with different age groups and in different areas, recognising their effectiveness and

the high levels of motivation they generate, despite their implementation being thought of as challenging.

Nevertheless, Scruggs et al. (2010) also clarify that these strategies do not solve all the educational objectives, nor should they be considered as a universal formula. Even so, when students present learning or retain lexical information, mnemonic techniques constitute a valuable tool within the teacher's repertoire. For that reason, they remain a strategy well-founded in evidence, especially in rather important evidence for differentiating learners and teachers. In alignment with this perspective, Cohen's (1987) study concludes that "such memory techniques would not be intended to replace the other approaches to vocabulary learning, but rather to complement them by providing a link for facilitating retrieval of a second-language word or its native-language meaning" (p.17).

METHODOLOGY

Methodology Design

Descriptive Research

The research follows a descriptive research approach. Siedlecki (2020) defines this design as one that examines the characteristics of a population and identifies existing problems within a unit, organization, or population. This type of approach was selected because, according to Boudah (2011), descriptive research is used to describe the features of or provide a clearer image of a phenomenon, where researchers who decide to conduct this form of research do not manipulate the subject of study in order to determine cause and effect.

Qualitative Design

The data for this study were collected using a qualitative research design, which, as defined by Creswell and Creswell (2018), is "an approach designed to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 41). This design is particularly appropriate for investigating the context-specific nature of vocabulary learning challenges among low-proficiency 10th-grade EFL students.

Qualitative researchers, as Denzin and Lincoln (2018) describe, examine phenomena in their natural settings, seeking to interpret them through the meanings participants themselves attribute to their experiences. Patton (2015) further emphasizes the value of immersion in real-world contexts to generate thick descriptions of behaviours, interactions, and subjective interpretations without artificial manipulation.

To ensure methodological rigor and trustworthiness, the study incorporates triangulation, a strategy that involves gathering data through multiple sources and methods to seek convergence across perspectives and mitigate biases inherent in any single approach (Bailey, 2018). Specifically, a structured observational checklist with a 4-point Likert scale was used to

document current vocabulary teaching strategies and classroom management practices. This was complemented by semi-structured interviews and unstructured observations, which allowed deeper exploration of the "how" and "why" behind students' lexical gaps, including teachers' practices and students' emotional engagement with English.

For example, this method helps the researcher record the actual strategies teachers use and how low-level students behave while learning new words. Additionally, being descriptive is necessary to understand the teachers' opinions and experiences, which are very important in the classroom. This information is vital because it shows exactly where students are struggling. By describing these current problems first, the researcher can better explain why using keyword mnemonics is a practical solution for this specific group.

Participants

The target group for this study consisted of 29 tenth-grade EFL students at the intermediate level working with B1-level English material. However, classroom observations indicated that their actual English proficiency was closer to the beginner level. They receive English classes from Monday to Friday, except on Tuesdays, when they are held at different times during the day, with an average of 1.5 hours of EFL classes. The assigned English teacher for this course was also observed to analyse her teaching approach to vocabulary learning and students' behaviour.

Data Gathering Tools

Observations

Structured Observation Checklist. Structured observation is a type of non-participant observation, which implies direct observation in an environment that does not allow interaction with participants. It allows the collection of data that cannot be easily obtained with other methods, such as surveys or interviews (McKechnie and Reiss, 2008).

The structured observation is essential for analysing vocabulary teaching strategies because it gives a clear, measurable picture of what happens in the classroom. According to McKechnie and Reiss (2008), structured observation utilizes checklists or observation schedules in which data is recorded and analysed according to established criteria like variable values which have been defined explicitly to guarantee coherence during data collection.

The instrument employed was an observation guide, adapted from the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" developed by Abdallah (2012). The adaptation of the tool was based on parameters that help collect information about the instances of vocabulary learning in an EFL class. This checklist was created using Microsoft Word and later printed to apply it in the classroom. This information is important because it reveals which strategies are being applied.

Unstructured Observation Notes. In an initial exploratory phase during the pre-professional practicum, an unstructured observation was conducted to gain an understanding of classroom dynamics. McKechnie and Mulhall (2008) state that, while performing investigation processes, researchers observe and listen actively, and data collection is very detailed and meticulous. This is especially important at the beginning of a project when significant aspects are not yet being discovered.

Additional information was collected during the week following the structured observation checklists to complement the research. This information was also necessary to address one of the specific objectives of the study, namely, identifying the factors that contribute to lexical gaps among low-proficiency 10th-grade students. These data were collected through unstructured observation, which Gillham (2010) defines as an open-ended, qualitative research technique in which the observer records behaviour in greater detail as it occurs, without using predetermined categories or checklists.

As the research questions and the interest of the researchers become more defined, the study focus narrows progressively. Towards the end of the fieldwork period, observations could

become more selective; however, it is important to be aware of any events that could be significant for the research (Bailey, 2018).

To clearly describe what happens in the classroom, this study uses Spradley's (1980) ideas for looking at social situations. Spradley (1980) says that nine parts are present in almost all social situations:

Spaces: the physical places; Objects: the physical things that are present; Actors: the people involved; Acts: single actions that people perform; Activities: sets of related acts that people carry out; Events: sets of related activities that people carry out; Time: the sequencing that occurs over time; Goals: the things people are trying to accomplish; and Feelings: the emotions felt and expressed (p. 78).

Semi-structured interview

An interview was chosen as a supplementary tool to investigate the vocabulary strategies that were not evident during the days of observation.

As stated by Cannell and Kahn (1968), the research interview is a dialogue between two people where the interviewer starts the conversation to elicit particular details pertinent to the researcher's objectives regarding the study.

As a result, a teaching interview was prepared using interview questions modified from Louise Josefsson's research study, Teachers' Reflections about Vocabulary Teaching (2012). With this interview, the researcher hoped to obtain information about current teaching practices and the teachers' views regarding the impediments to students' success. Since the interview was semi-structured, it also allowed for the emergence of new themes during the discussion.

According to Lewis-Beck et al. (2004), semistructured interviewing is a qualitative research method characterized by a flexible and fluid structure. Instead of a fixed list of standardized questions, it uses an interview guide that outlines key topics and themes to cover. This approach lets interviewers change the order and wording of questions and decide which areas

to probe more deeply with different participants. As a result, the conversation can be shaped by both the interviewee's own understandings and the researcher's interests, allowing unexpected themes to surface.

Data collection procedures

In order to apply the research instrument and to collect relevant information for the development of the study, a formal request was made to the Director of the institution and to the English department coordinator to obtain the needed authorization to carry on the investigation within the institution's facilities. The said request was successfully accepted.

The collection of data was obtained by performing both structured and non-structured, non-intrusive, non-participatory class observations inside the assigned classroom, employing checklists and field observation notes. These observations were conducted three times a week for a period of two weeks, with an amount of 90 minutes per session. The observation instruments were chosen to obtain detailed information about the pedagogical practices of the teacher and the behaviour of students.

As a complement to the information obtained through observations, an interview was conducted with the class EFL teacher, which was done in-person during the recess time to ensure it did not interfere with class hours. This interview allowed the teacher to share her pedagogical experience and her perception regarding the struggle students may present during vocabulary learning.

This methodological approach allowed an adequate use of the instruments of research, in line with the objectives of the study. In the same way, the implementation of qualitative instruments and the planning of the data collection process, through a previously established protocol, contributed to the obtaining of more systematic and effective data gathering.

Exploratory Observation Protocol

The primary objective of this exploratory observation was to identify and describe classroom behaviors, teaching practices, and learning challenges related to vocabulary learning among EFL students.

During our practicum in June and July 2025, we conducted an informal observation of the classroom and, using unstructured observation notes, we noted that many students did not seem to retain new vocabulary about teaching practices, even when traditional techniques (i.e. translation, repetition, and visual aids) were used.

This study was conducted in the previously mentioned tenth grade EFL classroom, where the class teacher was also an observed subject. The objective of this research was to observe classroom processes that occur spontaneously, without any type of interference. This process gave the researcher the opportunity to understand how a particular time of the day influenced student performance, retention, and even the level of engagement during English lessons.

Exploratory observations consisted of non-intrusive, drop-in visits over two-hour sessions on three consecutive days in November of 2025:

- **Wednesday 26th:** 7:50 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.

- **Thursday 27th:** 11:00 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

- **Friday 28th:** 1:00 p.m. – 2:20 p.m.

Each observation lasted approximately one hour and twenty minutes, focusing on teacher-student interactions, vocabulary instruction methods, and learner engagement.

The primary data collection tool was a structured observation checklist created for this study.

The checklist was supplemented by a field notes log to document specific classroom events, noteworthy quotes, and reflections observed during each session.

DATA ANALYSIS

Structured Observation Checklist Analysis

The following data analysis starts with the interpretation of information compiled by performing a structured class observation, consisting of three different sessions, which was designed to determine which strategies for learning and teaching were used, justifying the need for investigation to propose the keyword mnemonic strategy as an additional effective and specific pedagogical intervention for students with low English levels.

After three separate observation sessions, the results from each checklist were combined to find an overall average. The final ratings in the combined checklist show the levels that came up most often across the three sessions. By focusing on the rating that appeared the most, the study made sure that the teaching patterns described are a reliable picture of how the teacher usually teaches.

A 4-point scale was used to evaluate the management of the class and the teaching techniques used to dictate the lesson. An explanation of the scales is given below:

- **1 (Very poor):** This aspect is a significant issue.

- **2 (Poor):** Performed with inconsistency or deficiency.

- **3 (Good):** Performed most of the time correctly.

- **4 (Very good):** The aspect is managed expertly and effectively.

Classroom Management Checklist

Specific Teaching Aspect/Skills	Rating Scale (1-4)
The teacher's handling of vocabulary teaching/learning aids (e.g. flashcards, slides, or objects) and their employment is efficient.	2
Providing constructive and appropriate feedback to learners when a student uses a word incorrectly.	3
Employ adequate observation strategies/techniques (e.g., scanning the class and observing the entire class)	3
Being encouraging and supportive, being a good listener by listening	3

Table 1 Teachers' techniques and strategies aspects and scoring. Table based on the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" retrieved from Abdallah (2012).
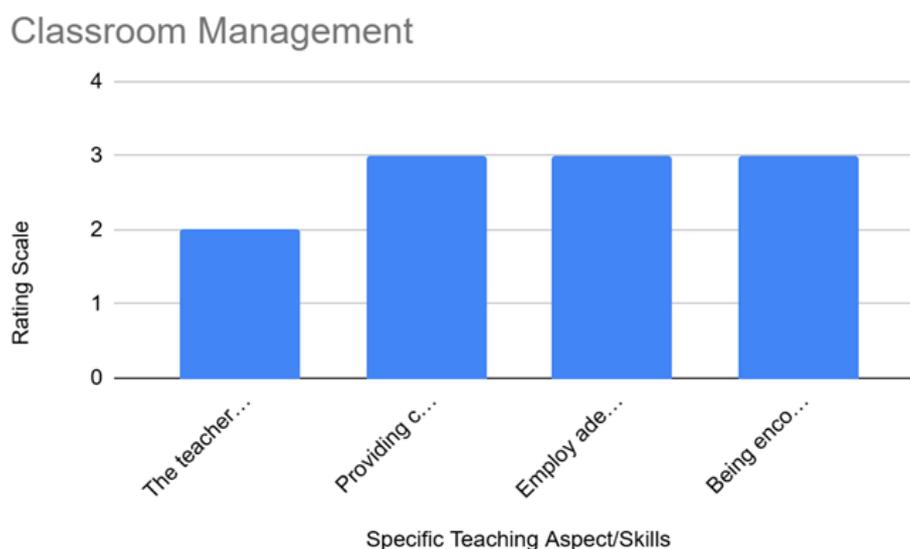

Figure 3 Classroom management teaching skills score scale. Graph developed by the authors.

The teacher demonstrates several key strengths, particularly in her ability to monitor the classroom and provide support. She adopts an active role by moving around the room to check student progress, helping ensure that learners stay focused. Furthermore, she provides timely feedback when errors occur, helping to correct mistakes in word choice or pronunciation immediately. Her support for low-proficiency learners is evident in her use of "rehearsed phrases," which gives students the necessary tools to communicate basic needs in English.

Despite these strengths, there are notable areas for improvement regarding teaching aids and the use of resources. A primary concern is the inefficient use of technology, specifically using a projector in a room where the light makes the display nearly invisible. This creates a barrier to learning as students cannot clearly see what is displayed on it. Additionally, the teacher exhibits a degree of selective attention, as she tends to focus on dedicated students while ignoring those who are disruptive. Finally, while the teacher's feedback is helpful, the students have very few opportunities to practice new English words spontaneously, which is essential for overcoming lexical deficiencies.

TECHNIQUES/ STRATEGIES

Specific Teaching Aspect/Skills	Rating Scale (1-4)
Uses appropriate warm-up activities (images or games) that reinforce topics or vocabulary previously learnt, and engages students at the beginning of the lessons	2
Uses various questioning and answering techniques.	4

Using various teaching strategies appropriate to the learners' level (visual aids, scaffolding, modelling)	2
Presents new language items (i.e., vocabulary) effectively and properly (images, definitions, synonyms/antonyms, translation, or mnemonics).	2
Deals with various types of language-learning activities within the lesson (e.g., grammatical exercises, language practice, speaking activities, listening activities, reading activities, and communicative activities) efficiently and properly.	3
Teachers' giving of instructions (e.g., giving clear instructions before going through an activity; making sure that all learners understand exactly what they are required to do)	2
The teacher's usage of both verbal and nonverbal communication (body language and facial expressions) to reinforce the meaning of the words.	3

Table 2 Teachers' techniques and strategies aspects and scoring. Table adapted from the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" retrieved from Abdallah (2012).
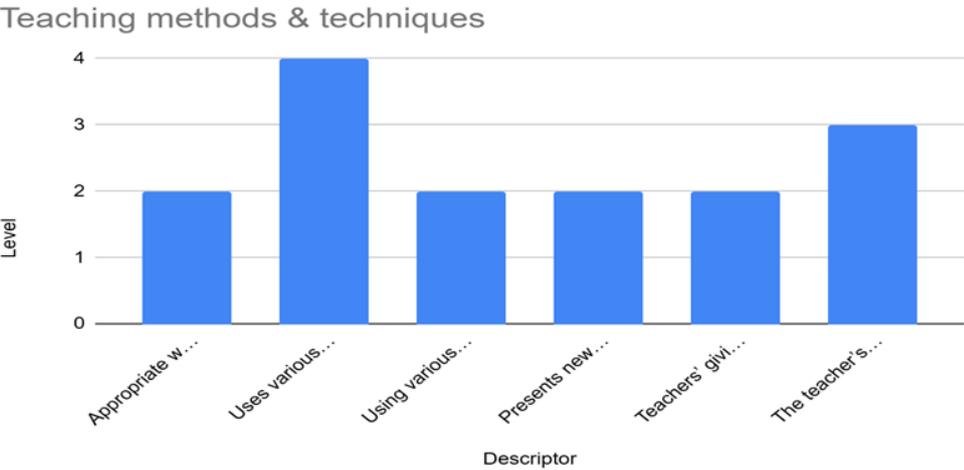

Figure 4 Teaching methods and techniques descriptors result bar graph. Graph developed by the authors.

The teacher's strongest quality is her command of questioning techniques. Rather than providing direct definitions, she asks questions that force students to think about the meaning of new words. She also uses body language and facial expressions effectively to help students infer meaning and overcome vocabulary gaps, an especially important strategy for learners with low English proficiency. In addition, she incorporates a range of activities, such as group reading and dialogue creation. Although the instructor uses English as the primary medium of instruction to create an immersive environment, a significant linguistic gap remains. Because the students have a low level of proficiency, the exclusive use of the target language often becomes a barrier to comprehension.

The main area that needs improvement is the clarity and presentation of vocabulary items. Although the teacher employs multiple strategies, they do not always align with students' proficiency levels, resulting in confusion and frequent one-on-one repetition of directions.

While new vocabulary is presented with visual aids, it lacks sufficient modelling and clear examples, making it harder for students to understand newly introduced words. Another significant weakness is the limited oral production in English. Moreover, she relies mostly on the book, which tends to make the teacher's warm-up activities not strong enough to prepare the students for the lesson's vocabulary.

This analysis concludes that there is a misalignment between the teacher's language and the students' English level. The teacher uses tools that are well-suited for intermediate students, who can infer meaning from context and understand the immersive nature of the English class.
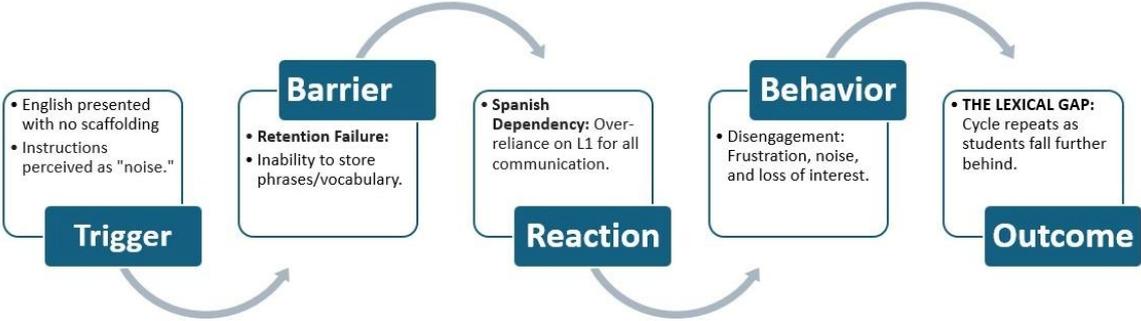
Unstructured observation notes

Figure 5 Data analysis flowchart. Flowchart developed by authors.

This observation tool was applied during regular lessons taught by the 10th-grade basic-level English teacher. It was designed to identify, describe, and better understand the different ways in which students struggle with English in real time, while they are actively participating in classroom activities.

An initial Informal observation at the institution using unstructured observation field notes was conducted in June and July 2025, which indicated that many students experience difficulty retaining new vocabulary, even when traditional teaching methods (e.g., translation, repetition, and visual aids) are used.

The observations reveal a significant reliance on Spanish, persistent behavioural disruptions, and a lack of retention regarding basic English structures. While the teacher uses different strategies, such as giving instructions only in English, questioning techniques, and helping students individually at their desks, their efforts are frequently undermined by students' English level and a lack of student production opportunities. Critical issues include problems retaining basic level vocabulary and a strong tendency for students to lose interest, especially during the final hours of the school day or after recess.

The most relevant observation was the misalignment between the teacher's language and the students' current level. When the teacher explains instructions and doubts only in English, yet students immediately ask for clarifications in Spanish or say they do not understand.

One of the main challenges is that students use Spanish almost all the time in the classroom. Students rely on it for both casual conversation and for clarification. They often ask for Spanish translations of the words they want to write, and when they are confused, they often express this confusion in Spanish. Even when students are working together on activities or group tasks, they continue talking to each other in Spanish. The teacher does give instructions and explanations in English, but students still tend to ask their questions in Spanish, even right after the teacher has explained something in English.

Students are not familiar with simple English structures or B1- level vocabulary. They also have trouble remembering short, practiced phrases that they use every day. For example, many students still struggle with a simple question like "What time is it?" even right after the teacher corrects them. During oral presentations, they often forget words they have already practiced and cannot remember them, even when the teacher gives them hints.

During classroom visits, student behavior varied slightly, partly because English classes took place at different times of day. Overall, classroom management is a major challenge, and behavior often depends on the time and stage of the lesson.

Students frequently make unnecessary noise, shout off-topic comments, and insult classmates. Some highly disruptive students are separated to work alone. At times, about half the class is inactive, either waiting for others, doing nothing, or even falling asleep, especially during the last hour of the day. Students are also seen leaving their seats, walking around, or stepping out of the classroom during instruction.

Classroom observations show a cycle of low understanding and high frustration, mainly caused by serious gaps in basic vocabulary. Students are expected to complete B1-level tasks, but

many do not know enough words for simple communication. They struggle with common words and often need Spanish-to-English translations to write. According to Vygotski (1978, as cited in Taber, 2019), the misalignment observed between the teacher's English-only instruction and the students' low proficiency indicates that the learning activities are currently located in the Zone of Distal Development (ZDD); therefore, scaffolding is the key mechanism required to bridge this gap, ensuring that the tasks are neither so simple that they cause boredom nor so difficult that they lead to frustration.

In the end, students rely on Spanish because they do not have enough English vocabulary to manage simple classroom tasks. Even when teachers try to push them to think about meanings instead of giving answers, the basic vocabulary gap makes it hard for students to meet the course-level expectations.

Semi-structured Interviews

- **Can you describe one of your typical vocabulary lessons?**

In a typical vocabulary lesson, the teacher starts by showing students pictures, reading different definitions, and also reading different types of sentences. In the sentences, students have to see the words. After that, the teacher shows them the definition of each word, and they make different types of sentences as well. That depends on the level, because in this class, there are only a few students who know English, so those few are the ones who answer while the others remain quiet.

- **Is vocabulary learning a separate or an integrated part of your lessons? And how do you incorporate it?**

Vocabulary learning is mostly an integrated part of the teacher's lessons, but it depends on the book. The textbook provides the topics for each unit, and with each topic, it introduces specific vocabulary related to the content and to the grammar structures that will be covered in that

lesson. The teacher usually teaches vocabulary together with the topic and structure of the unit, following what the book presents.

- **What kind of methods do you use to teach vocabulary?**

The teacher uses different methods to teach vocabulary, focusing on pictures, context, and exercises from the book. They usually introduce new words by showing pictures or examples and giving clear definitions. Then, students read and work with sentences where the words are used in context. After that, students create their own sentences. To help them remember the words, the teacher uses activities such as crosswords and fill-in-the-blank exercises from the textbook, as well as the Quizlet app, which provides extra practice and review.

- **Which methods do you find most efficient in teaching vocabulary?**

The teacher uses different methods to teach vocabulary, focusing on pictures, context, and exercises from the book. The teacher usually introduces new words by showing pictures or examples and giving clear definitions. Then, students read and work with sentences, using the words in context. After that, students create their own sentences. To help them remember the words, the teacher uses activities such as crosswords and fill-in-the-blank exercises from the textbook, as well as the Quizlet app, which provides extra practice and review.

- **Anything you want to add?**

The most important thing when teaching, not only vocabulary but in general, is to fight against students' lack of interest. The teacher believes that behaviour is the worst part because students who do not know much English do not like it. The teacher has to work to engage them in the class. The issue is motivation, because at this level, students do not want to do anything. They only want to talk and bother others. The teacher tries to move them away from that behaviour and attract or engage them in the class. That is the most difficult part for the teacher. After that, when the teacher manages to overcome this, they see that students start getting more involved in the activities.

The interview indicated that the teacher's current vocabulary teaching mainly benefits the small group of students who already know some English. Most learners with low English proficiency remain silent and lose motivation. Because the teacher relies heavily on the textbook, students are introduced to higher-level (B1) vocabulary before they have a solid grasp of basic (A1-A2) grammar and words, which makes the tasks too difficult for them. Their lack of interest and their behavior issues appear to be a form of defense: they act out because they cannot understand the English being used. Even though the teacher uses pictures and provides definitions, these traditional strategies do not effectively help this 10th-grade class retain new vocabulary.

CONCLUSIONS

After analysing related literature, the classroom observations, and the teacher's interview, it can be concluded that:

- The teacher's instruction is often beyond students' English level, so many low-level learners are unable to learn new words from context. In addition, students rely heavily on Spanish for almost all interactions and questions, even immediately after an explanation in English, and frequently depend on direct Spanish-to-English translations for simple tasks.

- The teacher mainly uses translation, repetition, and visual aids to teach, introducing new vocabulary with pictures, simple definitions, and example sentences. Instruction follows the textbook through activities like crosswords and fill-in-the-blank exercises. The teacher also uses digital tools such as Quizlet for extra practice and review outside of regular class. Observation provided information on classroom methods, while the interview revealed additional techniques that did not appear during the observation week.

- A lack of student motivation and engagement was evident not only in the classroom observations but also in the teacher's perspectives shared during the interview. In many sessions, approximately half of the class appeared inactive, doing nothing or even falling asleep, particularly during the final hours of the school day. The teacher identified addressing students' lack of interest as the most critical challenge in the classroom.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers ensure scaffolding to facilitate understanding. While the teacher currently uses non-verbal cues effectively, they should consistently pair them with clear modeling and concrete examples of new vocabulary instead of relying solely on textbook definitions.

- The teacher should avoid focusing solely on dedicated students while neglecting disruptive students, as this further widens the lexical gap for learners who are already struggling. Since disruptive behaviour is often linked to a lack of understanding, using mnemonics to increase aptitude and motivation may help.

- It is recommended that teachers incorporate the Keyword Mnemonic Strategy as an additional tool to enhance vocabulary learning for low-proficiency 10th-grade EFL students. It supports memory and recall through sound-image associations. Furthermore, it helps address the lack of interest and motivation frequently observed in these classrooms. Secondary data collected during this research project and discussed in the literature review support these benefits.

- It is important to note that teachers should use these mnemonic techniques to complement, not replace, existing methods. While they already employ tools such as Quizlet and questioning techniques, they can add the Keyword Mnemonic Strategy as an additional tool to foster vocabulary growth and increase learner engagement.

- Finally, learners are encouraged to explore a range of vocabulary learning strategies, including mnemonics. Various types of mnemonics can support students. Although association mnemonics, or keyword mnemonics, are specifically designed for vocabulary learning, they still have limitations, as they work best with acoustically similar words. Therefore, to use this tool effectively, learners should combine the techniques already used and regularly practice.

PROPOSAL

Project Title:	Keyword Mnemonic for Vocabulary Learning
Project Team:	Morales Mence, Denisse Faleria and Narváez Chalacán Ana Belén
Main Objective:	To implement the keyword mnemonic strategy for EFL low-English-level tenth-grade students as an alternative to retrieve and improve vocabulary learning.
Specific Objective	To identify level-appropriate vocabulary by diagnosing the current English language proficiency of 10th-grade EFL students.
	To create a mnemonic-based vocabulary booklet, enabling students to have the tool to bridge new English terms with familiar phonetic 'keywords' and visual imagery.
	To integrate effective keyword images and linking phrases through a clear, step-by-step process, making full use of the vocabulary templates and examples included in the booklet.
	To monitor and assess the practical integration of the mnemonic strategy in the classroom through weekly observational checklists.
Execution time:	Starting: 04/05/2026 — Ending: 14/08/2026
Evaluation time:	Starting: 17/08/2026 — Ending: 31/08/2026
Project Description	

This project is justified by directly addressing the critical need to improve the ineffectiveness of rote memorization in EFL vocabulary learning by introducing Keyword mnemonic Strategies. By ensuring implementation for 4 weeks, the project establishes a reliable and replicable model. The key outcome will quantify ultimate success: a minimum mean increase of 20% in students' post-test scores, providing evidence to validate this strategy as a solution for improving 10th-grade EFL vocabulary mastery.

Table 3 Project proposal Description, Table developed by the authors.

Execution Matrix						
Objective (number)	**Activity**	**What will be done?**	**What change is expected - Outcomes**	**Resources**	**Time**	**Responsibility**
S.O.1	Diagnose students' level	Administer a diagnostic English vocabulary pre-test	Students' vocabulary level is identified accurately	Diagnostic test, answer sheets	1 week	Researchers, English teachers
S.O.2	Develop a mnemonic-based vocabulary booklet	Design and incorporate the booklet with examples, usage, and templates of keyword mnemonics, which help students in using phonetic keywords and visual imagery during vocabulary lessons.	Students will get prepared with this new vocabulary teaching tool.	Digital material, laptop, Canva	4 weeks	Researchers, English teachers
S.O.3	To conduct an intervention about KW mnemonic strategies	Conduct sessions where students learn, practice, and design keyword images and linking phrases using the step-by-step guidelines, templates, and	Students demonstrate the ability to independently create effective keyword images and linking phrases for vocabulary instruction. Increased consistency	Instructional booklet, projector, worksheets, whiteboard and markers, training materials, computer or laptop, presentation	4 weeks	Researchers, English teachers, coordinators

		examples from the booklet.	and quality in mnemonic-based vocabulary teaching.	slides, training room or meeting space.		
S.O.4	Monitoring students' weekly progress while receiving the KWM with the booklet as a guide	Students will be tracked weekly through observation techniques and informal assessments.	Students will be able to incorporate the new vocabulary tool into Language Arts class sessions, thereby improving their learning and engagement.	Assessment checklists	During the whole project	Researchers, English teachers
S.O.5	To measure vocabulary gains attributable to the intervention	Administer a monitoring test	Vocabulary gains are measured, and it reflects a considerable improvement	Vocabulary test, answer sheets	At the end of the project	Researchers, English teachers

Table 4 Execution Matrix table. Matrix developed by the authors.

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APPENDIX

UNIVERSIDAD CATÓLICA
DE SANTIAGO DE GUAYAQUIL

FAH

Facultad de
Artes y Humanidades

FAH-PINE-014-2025
Guayaquil, 21 de noviembre del 2025

Dra.
Rosy Cañizares Hermoza
Rectora
Unidad Educativa Mariscal Sucre
En su despacho.

Reciba un cordial saludo. Por el presente solicito a usted, muy comedidamente y salvo su mejor criterio, se permita a las señoritas Ana Belén Narváez Chalacan con CI# 0959715392 y Denisse Faleria Morales Mence con CI# 0943991588, estudiantes del 8vo ciclo de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros – inglés, de la Facultad de Artes y Humanidades de la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil, realizar recolección de información para elaborar su Trabajo de Integración Curricular (Proyecto de titulación) denominado *"Integration of Dual Mnemonics Strategies for Vocabulary Retention in the Development of EFL 10th Graders´Speaking Skills at a Private School in the City of Guayaquil in the scholastic year 2025 - 2026"*

Las señoritas Narváez y Morales estarán realizando dicha actividad en la clase de inglés que reciben los estudiantes en la institución que usted acertadamente dirige, durante el mes de noviembre, diciembre 2025 y enero 2026.

De antemano agradezco la atención brindada.

Atentamente,

Lcdo. Stanley González Ubilla, M.Ed.
Director
Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas
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	Keyword Mnemonic Vocabulary Booklet	
Link:	https://drive.google.com/file/d/1DGr4kIpZEzo6SnNTAeOdOdnjJANJlrz1/view?usp=sharing	
Target:	Aim for 10 words per week over your 4-week implementation phase (totalling 40 words).	
Focus:	Prioritize words from their Own It! 3 textbook to ensure "curricular relevance" and immediate "personal relevance".	
Outcome:	This approach ensures the "mental work" is manageable, reduces the risk of students "falling asleep" or becoming inactive due to frustration, and allows for the "rehearsed phrases" and "meaning-focused output" necessary to bridge the lexical gap.	

Words were sourced directly from the students' school textbook, Own It! 3, to ensure curricular relevance. The words selected for the vocabulary booklet are "keyword-friendly," meaning they allow for an obvious acoustic or orthographic link to a familiar word in the learner's native language (Putnam, 2015). Concrete words that can be perceived through the senses are especially important, as they facilitate the formation of mental images (Nation, 2001). However, abstract words were also included to test the versatility of the mnemonic. In such cases, Cohen (1987) suggests that if the word being learned is abstract, it should be recoded via an acoustic link into a more concrete word or concept in the native language (L1). This concrete L1 concept is then linked through a mental image to the more abstract L2 word, bridging the gap between the intangible term and a relatable visual. Following Nation (2013), all words were chosen to facilitate a strong acoustic link between the target word and the keyword.

Preview:

Instructional Procedure		
Before the intervention		The diagnostic pre-test is presented in the booklet, including the target words.
Intervention (35 min)	**Presentation**	Over 4 weeks, a total of 40 target words will be studied. Each week, 10 words will be introduced to the students one by one.
		The researcher presents each of the target words through the following 5 steps:
		1. The teacher demonstrates an unlabelled pictorial flashcard of the target object/concept to elicit the L1 meaning from the students. Once identified, the teacher writes the meaning on the board. This ensures the students have a stable semantic foundation before introducing the mnemonic links.
		2. Once the meaning is established, the teacher introduces the target English word and pronounces it three times.
		3. The students are shown the labelled pictorial flashcard. After the teacher pronounces the target word on the flashcard, the students repeat the L2 pronunciation three times.
		4. The teacher writes the word, its parts of speech, and definition on the board.
		5. The students are shown a pictorial flashcard of an example sentence embedded in the related visual of the target word. After reading the example sentence, the teacher writes it on the board.
		Immediately after, the teacher introduces the Keyword.
	Practice	The keyword-mnemonic practice is carried out using a booklet containing a comic for each target word, which is shown and explained to the students.
		1. The teacher presents a booklet containing the keyword mnemonic next to the target word and has students repeat the L2 pronunciation while thinking of the sound-alike word.

		2. The teacher shows a comic-like picture depicting a meaningful interaction between the keyword and the target word's definition. Mnemonic Principle: For the association to be effective, the keyword and the definition must be "doing something together" in the image. 3. Students repeat the English pronunciation three times while looking at the interaction on the flashcard. Action: The teacher asks students to close their eyes and vividly visualize the interactive mental image created.
	Production	1. Target words will be introduced to the students one by one, and they will be asked to pronounce each word three times.
	Self-study	2. The keyword for each target word will then be presented to the participating students, who will be expected to guess and produce the corresponding target word orally. Students use the booklet to practice independently. Students will also be asked to write all target words in their notebooks, including their part of speech, definition, and one sentence for each target word. If an image is not effective, the student independently adds more vivid details to the mental picture to make it more salient for future retrieval.
Monitoring	**Informal Assessment**	An adapted Vocabulary Knowledge Scale (VKS) allows students to self-report their progress across different stages: from complete unfamiliarity, to having seen the word before, to being able to provide a meaning or use it in a sentence
After the intervention	**Post-Test**	Testing involves two distinct cognitive tasks: **1. Passive Recall:** Provide the L2 word; you must provide the L1 translation by invoking the keyword mediator and its image. **2. Passive Recognition:** A multiple-choice format.

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Carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

EFL Teaching Performance Observation Protocol Checklist

Lesson length: **90 min**   Course: **10ᵗʰ A**   Date: **Nov 26ᵀᴴ, 2025**

Main Teaching Aspects	Specific Teaching Aspect/Skills	Rating Scale			
		1	2	3	4
Teaching Methods & Techniques	5. Uses appropriate warm-up activities (images or games) that reinforce topics or vocabulary previously learnt and engages students at the beginning of the lessons.		✓		
	6. Uses various questioning and answering techniques.		·	✓	
	7. Using various teaching strategies appropriate to the learners' level (visual aids, scaffolding, modelling).		✓		
	8. Presents new language items (i.e., vocabulary) effectively and properly (images, definitions, synonyms/antonyms, translation, or mnemonics).		✓		
	9. Deals with various types of language-learning activities within the lesson (e.g., grammatical exercises, language practice, speaking activities, listening activities, reading activities, and communicative activities) efficiently and properly.			✓	
	10. Teachers' giving of instructions (e.g., giving clear instructions before going through an activity; making sure that all learners understand exactly what they are required to do)		✓		
	11. The teacher's usage of both verbal and nonverbal communication is appropriate (body language and facial expressions) to reinforce the meaning of the words.		✓		

The observation criteria were based on the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" retrieved from Abdallah (2012).

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Main Teaching Aspects	Specific Teaching Aspect/Skills	Rating Scale			
		1	2	3	4
Classroom Management	1. The teacher's handling of vocabulary teaching/learning aids (e.g. flashcards, slides, or objects) and employing is efficient.		✓		
	2. Providing constructive and appropriate feedback to learners when a student uses a word incorrectly.			✓	
	3. Employ adequate observation strategies/techniques (e.g., scanning the class and observing the entire class).			✓	
	4. Being encouraging and supportive, being a good listener by listening.			✓	

The observation criteria were based on the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" retrieved from Abdallah (2012).

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Lesson length: **90 min**   Course: **10ᵗʰ A**   Date: **Nov 27ᵗʰ 2025**

Main Teaching Aspects	Specific Teaching Aspect/Skills	Rating Scale			
		1	2	3	4
Classroom Management	1. The teacher's handling of vocabulary teaching/learning aids (e.g. flashcards, slides, or objects) and employing is efficient.		✓		
	2. Providing constructive and appropriate feedback to learners when a student uses a word incorrectly.			✓	
	3. Employ adequate observation strategies/techniques (e.g., scanning the class and observing the entire class).			✓	
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		1	2	3	4
Teaching Methods & Techniques	5. Uses appropriate warm-up activities (images or games) that reinforce topics or vocabulary previously learnt and engages students at the beginning of the lessons.		✓		
	6. Uses various questioning and answering techniques.			✓	
	7. Using various teaching strategies appropriate to the learners' level (visual aids, scaffolding, modelling).		✓		
	8. Presents new language items (i.e., vocabulary) effectively and properly (images, definitions, synonyms/antonyms, translation, or mnemonics).		✓		
	9. Deals with various types of language-learning activities within the lesson (e.g., grammatical exercises, language practice, speaking activities, listening activities, reading activities, and communicative activities) efficiently and properly.			✓	
	10. Teachers' giving of instructions (e.g., giving clear instructions before going through an activity; making sure that all learners understand exactly what they are required to do)			✓	
	11. The teacher's usage of both verbal and nonverbal communication is appropriate (body language and facial expressions) to reinforce the meaning of the words.			✓	

The observation criteria were based on the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" retrieved from Abdallah (2012).

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EFL Teaching Performance Observation Protocol Checklist

Lesson length: __90 min__   Course: __10ᵗʰ A__   Date: __Nov 28ᵗʰ 2025__

Main Teaching Aspects	Specific Teaching Aspect/Skills	Rating Scale			
		1	2	3	4
Classroom Management	1. The teacher's handling of vocabulary teaching/learning aids (e.g. flashcards, slides, or objects) and employing is efficient.		/		
	2. Providing constructive and appropriate feedback to learners when a student uses a word incorrectly.			/	
	3. Employ adequate observation strategies/techniques (e.g., scanning the class and observing the entire class).			/	
	4. Being encouraging and supportive, being a good listener by listening.			/	

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Lesson length: __90 min__   Course: __10ᵗʰ A__   Date: __Nov 28ᵗʰ 2025__

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	8. Presents new language items (i.e., vocabulary) effectively and properly (images, definitions, synonyms/antonyms, translation, or mnemonics).		/		
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	10. Teachers' giving of instructions (e.g., giving clear instructions before going through an activity; making sure that all learners understand exactly what they are required to do)		/		
	11. The teacher's usage of both verbal and nonverbal communication is appropriate (body language and facial expressions) to reinforce the meaning of the words.			/	

The observation criteria were based on the "EFL Teacher Evaluation/Observation Checklist" retrieved from Abdallah (2012).

DECLARACIÓN Y AUTORIZACIÓN

Nosotras, **Morales Mence, Denisse Faleria**, con C.C. # **0943991588**, y **Narváez Chalacán, Ana Belén** con C.C. # **0932205313**, autoras del trabajo de titulación: **Integration of keyword mnemonic strategy for vocabulary learning in efl 10th-graders at a private school in the city of Guayaquil in the scholastic year 2025-2026,** previo a la obtención del título de **Licenciadas en Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros Inglés** en la Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil.

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Guayaquil, 26 de febrero de 2026

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REPOSITORIO NACIONAL EN CIENCIA Y TECNOLOGÍA

FICHA DE REGISTRO DE TESIS/TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

TÍTULO Y SUBTÍTULO:	Integration of keyword mnemonic strategy for vocabulary learning in efl 10th-graders at a private school in the city of Guayaquil in the scholastic year 2025-2026.
AUTOR(ES)	Morales Mence, Denisse Faleria Narváez Chalacán, Ana Belén
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INSTITUCIÓN:	Universidad Católica de Santiago de Guayaquil
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ÁREAS TEMÁTICAS:	Teaching methods, Learning strategies, Vocabulary learning, Student motivation, Foreign language teaching.
PALABRAS CLAVES/ KEYWORDS:	Keyword Mnemonic (KWM), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Vocabulary Learning, Memory, Vocabulary Booklet

ABSTRACT:
Vocabulary constitutes the essential basis of communication. For this reason, students of a foreign language who cannot recognize the fundamental elements of a statement cannot actively participate in conversations. Within an EFL classroom, the scarcity of vocabulary tends to challenge the understanding of the target language and limits meaningful interaction. On the other hand, personal interest and motivation directly influence the learning process; therefore, it is necessary to apply didactic strategies that awaken curiosity and foster a positive attitude toward the study of a language. This project aims to analyse the process of vocabulary learning and examine how complementary tools, especially keyword mnemonics (KWM), can help overcome lexical difficulties among tenth-grade students in a private institution. The investigation was developed using a qualitative approach, whose instruments include structured and unstructured observation checklists and a teacher interview, with the purpose of tracking instructional strategies and student engagement. The results demonstrated the existence of a lexical gap that could be reduced using keyword mnemonics, which foster improved retention by creating multiple retrieval pathways through acoustic and visual stimuli. Based on these findings, a classroom intervention was designed, which includes a vocabulary booklet and monitoring procedures to evaluate its effectiveness.

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