Students' perceptions regarding the use of visual aids in developing their English vocabulary

Percepciones de los estudiantes sobre el uso de ayudas visuales en el desarrollo de su vocabulario en Inglés

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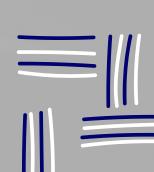**Universidad Nacional de Loja**
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1. INTRODUCTION

The English language not only encompasses the four language skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing but also vocabulary, which is considered a fundamental component for language acquisition. Therefore, English vocabulary is relevant to communicate effectively in the classrooms. Vocabulary is crucial in language learning acquisition because students can master all the language skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Sumaini, 2018). Within this framework, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education has designed the English curriculum in which eighth graders are expected to achieve level A1.1 (Ministerio de Educación, 2019), as identified by the Common European Framework of References (CEFR).

Unfortunately, it is noticeable that superior basic education students do not acquire the corresponding English level because they face difficulties in the teaching-learning process as evidenced by the researcher during internships. For that reason, teachers should not only understand the difficulties of students' vocabulary, but also use some useful strategies to enhance the teaching and learning process. As vocabulary teaching is one aspect of developing English proficiency, as vocabulary is one of the keys to success in learning English, Espmarker and Tedenby (2020) argued that teachers must be aware of the different strategies that can have an impact on students' ability to acquire vocabulary. Thereby, for the present study, visual aids were used as a strategy for improving students' vocabulary knowledge.

Previous research has demonstrated the effectiveness of using visual aids in classrooms to enhance students' English vocabulary. For instance, some authors emphasized the significance of visual aids as an effective instrument to learn foreign language vocabulary since they encouraged and motivated students in the learning process (Azma, 2017; González et al., 2021; Najakh, 2020). These findings are in agreement with Patesan et al. (2018) and Saripalli et al. (2018), who suggested that visual aids were effective in addressing students' vocabulary difficulties, boosting their motivation, and making the process of learning more interesting, enjoyable, and meaningful.

Taking into consideration the problem of lack of vocabulary among EFL students, the present research work suggests the implementation of visual aids as a pedagogical strategy to address the vocabulary challenges faced by eighth-graders. Therefore, this study aims to find out the students' perceptions about using visual aids in the development of English vocabulary at a public institution in Loja city. To conduct this research, the research inquiry that follows has been formulated: What are the eighth-grade students' perceptions about the implementation of visual aids to enhance their English vocabulary at a public institution in Loja during the 2022-2023 academic year?

Additionally, the present study provided many contributions to the educational and research fields. For instance, this research assisted eighth graders in improving their vocabulary by providing an enjoyable learning environment. Moreover, this study helped the preservice teacher improve her own professional practice and investigative skills. This research also contributed to English teachers by providing different types of visual aids, such as graphic organizers, pictures, realia, and posters to facilitate the development of students' vocabulary in the EFL context. Therefore, visual aids can be useful for preservice and in-service teachers, as well as other researchers, to have a deep understanding about the impact of visual aids on students' vocabulary and to support the conduction of further studies.

Finally, this chapter is organized with the following sections: an abstract that summarizes the main findings of the study, an introduction that provides background information of this research, and a methodology section that describes the research design, methodology, instruments, and participants. Similarly, the findings demonstrate the positive students' perceptions towards the use of visual aids; the discussion in which the results are compared to previous studies; the conclusions; and the bibliography section.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Students face several challenges during the English language teaching-learning process, such as wrong pronunciation, inability to distinguish individual sounds, confusing spelling, and confusion of basic words when reading, which may be

caused by the lack of vocabulary. However, it could be overcome when teachers develop teaching strategies with visual content that motivate students to learn. In this sense, the following theoretical framework examines the relationship between visual aids and English vocabulary as a teaching strategy to enhance English vocabulary among eighth graders.

Visual aids

Implementing dynamic teaching strategies such as visual aids could enhance students' learning significantly. Visual aids can be defined from many different perspectives; for instance, King (2018) describes visual aids as any material used to illustrate or provide a visual representation of information such as drawings, models, micrographs, slides and demonstrations. To this extent, visual aids are materials that can be recognized as helpful tools in teaching because they can help students understand a specific topic and remember information more easily. From another perspective established by Saripalli et al. (2018), visual aids are items of a visual manner that give shape and form to words or thoughts. In this way, visual aids are considered constructive materials in classrooms since they transform verbal information into visual information and improve students' understanding of topics.

Importance of visual aids

Some researchers described visual aids as a key component to be successful in the teaching-learning process. For instance, teachers can clearly define, establish, correlate, and coordinate precise concepts, interpretations, and appreciations in EFL classes by using visual aids (Patesan et.al., 2018). Visual aids can also help teachers explain abstract content and help students associate their prior knowledge with new information. Likewise, Wiyati and Marlina (2021) claimed that visual aids are a successful tool for effective English teaching as they draw students' attention, improve and facilitate their knowledge, boost students' enthusiasm, and assist students in memorizing new vocabulary. Consequently, visual aids are effective tools that can benefit both teachers and students since they make the teaching-learning process more dynamic and interesting.

Types of visual aids

There are many materials used as visual aids in teaching English language which can have a big impact on how students retain information. In this way, there are many types of visual aids to be used in classrooms, but the present research is focused on some common types of visual aids such as pictures, realia, graphic organizers and posters.

Pictures. - There are a variety of techniques and methods that can be used to increase students' knowledge, such as visual aids, particularly pictures. Pictures can be defined as representations of objects that the teachers are unable to bring the real object into the class directly (Khafidhoh & Carolina, 2019). In this sense, pictures are considered a visual presentation of people, places, or things, which provide powerful visual tools that facilitate students' learning. Using pictures can be more effective than the use of words because a visual representation can be easier to recall.

Realia.- When teachers need to bring realism into the classroom to increase students learning, realia is a good alternative. According to Irfan et al. (2021), "realia is a term used in the field of education to refer to certain real-life objects" (p. 340). In other words, it refers to real objects or things used in classrooms to illustrate real life situations. In this way, realia refer to real-life objects that allow students to make connections to their lives while learning new concepts. In short, realia refers to any real things utilized in the classroom to bring the content to life and boost students' language comprehension.

Graphic organizers. - The development of students' learning has been shown to benefit from a variety of strategies and techniques. One of those effective tools can be graphic organizers. According to Ajayi (2018), a graphic organizer can be defined as a "visual representation that students use for linking new learning to what they already know and making connections between ideas" (p. 1). In this way, a graphic organizer allows for organizing and expressing information clearly through the relationships between concepts.

Posters. - Another effective tool to improve student learning in EFL classrooms is the use of posters. A poster is defined by Chi (2018) as a picture which includes visual components such as lines, images, and phrases in order to draw attention and express a message briefly. In this way, posters can be a helpful tool for students since this is an interactive and engaging way to learn new words. For that reason, the use of posters in EFL classrooms draws the students' attention and, at the same time, helps them learn in a simple and fun way.

English vocabulary

When people need to communicate, vocabulary is the main component they use to express their ideas or thoughts. Vocabulary is considered the basis of any language as it refers to all the words that people use to communicate effectively. Lessard-Clouston (2013) interprets vocabulary as "the words of a language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do" (p. 2). In this sense, vocabulary refers to all the words in a language that are understood and used by a particular person or group of people. In short words, vocabulary involves all the words that people use to convey any message or communicate with others.

In addition, vocabulary has been largely considered a fundamental component of language learning and acquisition. This is corroborated by the findings of Espmarker and Tedenby (2020), who demonstrated that vocabulary growth is crucial since it gives pupils the building blocks they need to advance in their language acquisition. Additionally, they asserted that vocabulary is required for speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Thus, vocabulary places a greater influence on students' language skills, that is why teachers should provide students with effective and purposeful strategies to help them expand their vocabulary in order to communicate effectively.

Importance of vocabulary

In every language, vocabulary is very important to convey ideas, express thoughts, and communicate with others. Vocabulary is a very important element in any language, as it is the basis for communication. For that reason, Karakoç and Köse (2017) emphasized the significance of vocabulary for language acquisition as They

asserted that vocabulary knowledge, which pertains to the fundamentals of language acquisition and communication, is necessary for general language proficiency. This means that vocabulary is necessary within language because it encompasses the basic components that people need to express their thoughts and ideas, share information and communicate with others effectively.

From another point of view, Jannah et al. (2020) proposed that vocabulary has become an important aspect for learning the English language. Students are unable to communicate successfully or comprehend others without an adequate vocabulary. Also, it is well known that vocabulary helps EFL students develop the four language domains (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The more vocabulary they master, the more easily they will develop the four language domains. In this way. Yokubjonova (2020) stated "the importance of vocabulary is demonstrated by the fact that the more words students learn, the more they can express their own thoughts clearly" (p. 69). Based on this view, in order to communicate effectively, students need to know a large number of words.

Finally, Alqahtani (2015) pointed out that vocabulary does not contain rules that students can follow in order to expand and improve their knowledge, unlike syntax and phonology. In other words, it is not clear what rules apply or which vocabulary words should be learned first in order to increase the students' vocabulary knowledge. Grammatical features are important; however, without knowing vocabulary students cannot communicate at all. Regardless of the degree of learners' competence in grammar and pronunciation, effective communication between students is impossible without a large amount of vocabulary.

Vocabulary Aspects

Vocabulary is essential to all languages because it forms the foundation for communication in a variety of contexts. Nation (2001) stated word form, word meaning, and word use as three categories of vocabulary knowledge. Each of the three components of vocabulary knowledge is further subdivided into three more aspects. First, word form is broken down into spoken form, written form and word parts. Second, there are three categories for word meaning: form and meaning,

concepts and referents, and associations. Third, word use is broken down into grammatical functions, collocations and restrictions on use.

Form. - The first vocabulary aspect, "form", refers to the structure of a word or sentence. It encompasses its pronunciation (spoken form), spelling (written form), and word parts (such as a prefix, root, and suffix). Thus, in accordance with Nontasee & Sukying (2021), the capacity to recognize the phonological and morphological components of a word in both written and spoken form is known as knowledge of form.

Firstly, the written form of a word refers to how the word looks and how it is spelled correctly (Nation 2001). In this way, written form consists of forming words with the letters in the correct order, or the way a word is formed. Additionally, the spoken form includes being able to recognize the word when heard and being able to produce the spoken form to express meaning. Nation (2001) also stated that producing the spoken form of a word in English includes pronouncing the sounds of the word, as well as the degrees of stress of the appropriate syllables in the word if it contains more than one syllable. Finally, word parts are defined as "lexical elements that are used to create a morphologically complex word by adding affixes, including prefixes and suffixes" (Bubchaiya & Sukying, 2022, p. 71).

Meaning. - Meaning becomes one of the essential aspects that should be learned by students because it refers to how the word gives its meaning to the language users. In other words, meaning is related to the idea and the things to which it refers, as well as the associations that people have when they think of a particular word or expression. These ideas are in accordance with Nontasee and Sukying (2021) who mentioned that "understanding word meaning requires a student to be aware of its form, meaning, referents, lexical networks, and word associations" (p.36).

In general, knowing a word is knowing what the word sounds like (its spoken form), or what it looks like (its written form) and its meaning. However, it is necessary to know both the form of a word and its meaning. Nation (2001) asserts that when there is a clear correlation between the meaning and the form of a word, it is simpler to determine the connection between them. Another notable feature of

words that is especially striking when looking up words in a dictionary is that they have many different meanings, which refer to concepts and referents. This is particularly valid for high frequency terms (homonyms, homographs and homophones). Finally, **associations** refer to the semantic relationships between a large number of words in English. Understanding these relationships is useful for explaining word meaning and for creating activities that enrich students' understanding of words.

Use. - The term "use" refers to the way we use words and phrases when we communicate. This includes using words in the correct form (Nation, 2001). The knowledge of use is also described as "the places in which each word can be used, and the company the word is likely to keep" (Nontasee & Sukying, 2021, p.36). In this way, word use involves three sub aspects such as grammatical functions, collocations, and constraints on use.

To use a word, you need to know what part of speech it is and what grammatical patterns it can fit into. Grammatical functions of a word refer to its role in a sentence, such as subject, object, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, determiner, pronoun, and interjection. Therefore, the grammatical function of words is determined by their placement and location in a sentence, as well as how they are used. In addition, collocations refer to all those pairs or groups of words that usually appear together are called collocations and their learning is essential for good practice and interpretation of vocabulary. According to Nation (2001) "Collocation is just one of many relationships associated with the correct comprehension and productive use of vocabulary" (p. 77). The third sub-aspect refers to the restrictions on the use of the word which may differ across cultures. According to Nation (2001) where there are constraints, the clues for constraints on use can come from the way the word is translated into the first language or from the context in which the word is used.

3. METHODOLOGY

The present research work took place in the city of Loja known as the cultural and musical capital of Ecuador, which is located in the south of the country.

Specifically, the study was conducted at a public institution whose geographic coordinates are -4.01038 latitude and -79.1991 longitude, which corresponds to the Educational District Zone 7. The participants of the study were a group of 40 eighth-grade students from the 2022-2023 academic period, which included 21 females and 19 males with an average age of 11 and 13 years old, and who were expected to possess an A1.1 level of English language proficiency as set by the Ministry of Education. The technique for choosing the participants was convenience sampling since it involves selecting individuals who are willing and available to be studied and due to nearby location (Cresswell, 2012).

The research used a mixed method approach which combined the qualitative and quantitative data to gain a greater understanding of the impact of visual aids on students' vocabulary knowledge (Creswell, 2012). Similarly, this research followed an action research cycle model developed by Susman (1983), in which an intervention plan was designed and implemented to improve students' learning. This cycle is a systematic procedure used by teachers to gather quantitative and qualitative data to address improvements in their students' learning and their teaching performance (Creswell, 2012). Thereby, to effectively solve the problem found among EFL students, the researcher adopted the following steps from the action research cycle model which has been adapted for the development of the study.

Diagnosing. - In the first stage, the research project involved identifying a problem within the educational context. In this way, the researcher found a major issue about eighth-grade students' lack of vocabulary development based on extensive observations made in EFL classrooms during internships. Thus, the lack of vocabulary among eighth-grade students was the problem identified in a public institution during the 2022–2023 academic period.

Action Planning. - The following step involved conducting extensive study on a variety of potential solutions to address the issue that had been identified. The researcher suggested the use of visual aids as a possible solution to successfully address the issue that was found. Furthermore, an extensive literature analysis and previous studies on the relationship between English vocabulary and visual aids

were carried out. The conceptualizations of the identified variables were utilized to create an action plan that included a questionnaire and field notes as research tools to find out students' perceptions about the implementation of visual aids. Furthermore, according to Creswell (2012), a code system was incorporated into the questionnaire instrument to uniquely identify every student and adhere to the ethical concept of privacy.

Taking Action. - Following the creation of research instruments including the questionnaire and field notes, an action plan was executed to gather qualitative and quantitative data about how visual aids were used to improve students' vocabulary knowledge. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaire instrument was structured according to the Likert scale, in which the participants indicated their agreement or disagreement on an item through a specific type of scale and gave reasons for their choice. In this way, the questionnaire was a mixed instrument that consisted of ten closed-ended questions to gather quantitative data, which were followed by open-ended questions in which the students provided their opinion to justify their choice, which collected qualitative data.

During the execution of the intervention plan, the classes were conducted using different types of visual aids each week which focused on improving students' vocabulary. In addition, the researcher, who acted as a participant observer, used field notes to constantly monitor the execution of the action plan, which were completed after classes. However, the action plan was flexible which allowed the various intervention activities to be adjusted to the needs of the students and any unique study circumstances.

Evaluating. After implementing the intervention plan, the research question was addressed by analyzing and interpreting the quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the research instruments. Quantitative data was processed through descriptive statistics that were displayed in frequency tables, while qualitative data was illustrated through a thematic analysis because the data acquired was represented through broad themes. In this way, memory retention, increasing vocabulary, interactive instruction, increasing comprehension and engagement and

motivation were the broad themes identified. Similarly, the qualitative data collected from field notes was interpreted to corroborate the quantitative data.

Specifying Learning. The final phase involved the researcher's reflection on the results and challenges encountered in carrying out the intervention plan, which would be disseminated to the educational community. The findings showed that visual aids had a beneficial effect on students' vocabulary understanding, despite some limitations, including a small sample size, short periods of time, and few weeks for the development of the intervention plan. The primary results were presented together with conclusions and suggestions that addressed the research questions concerning the students' perceptions about the implementation of visual aids in class. These findings could be used to guide future research aimed at helping EFL teachers improve their students' vocabulary knowledge by utilizing visual aids in the classroom.

4. RESULTS

The following section deals with the description of the results obtained from the research instruments related to the students' perceptions towards the implementation of visual aids in EFL classrooms. The results collected from the aforementioned research instruments, which are graphically represented tables, are described in greater detail below.

Table 1

Students' perceptions regarding memory retention through visual aids

Statements	SA	A	D	SD
1. The use of visual aids helped me retain new words better than just listening to the teacher speak.	54%	43%	0%	3%
10. Unlike traditional lessons, visual aids facilitated the memorization of new vocabulary.	58%	34%	8%	0%

Note. SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree

As shown in Table 1, the findings revealed that more than a half of the students (54%) "strongly agreed" that the visual content is useful for retaining new words, while an additional 43 % "agreed" with this statement. These results indicated that

a significant proportion of the class (97%) affirmed that visual aids were a useful strategy to improve their memory retention skills related to vocabulary acquisition. From the open-ended questions, students manifested that they could learn more words in English with the use of visual aids rather than just words. From the researcher field notes, it was identified that the majority of the students could retain more information when visual aids were used in class. On the other side, a tiny fraction of the class (3%) "strongly disagreed", suggesting that the visual content is not enough to retain new vocabulary.

Regarding the difference between traditional lesson and lessons with visual aids strategy, the findings showed that more than a half of students (58%) "agreed" and under a fifth of the class (34%) "strongly agreed" with this statement. This suggests that a very large proportion (92%) stated that the implementation of visual aids was successful in making English classes more interactive, as well as making it easier to memorize new vocabulary, including the teacher's explanation. These findings are also supported by the researcher observations through field notes. However, a small percentage (8%) "disagreed", suggesting some students may struggle with memory recall.

Table 2

Students' perceptions regarding the increase of vocabulary knowledge through pictures

Statements	SA	A	D	SA
2. The pictures helped me understand the meaning of the words faster.	54%	43%	3%	0%
3. The pictures helped me remember the written form of new words easily.	50%	45%	5%	0%

Note. SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree

Table 2 shows that over half of students (54%) "strongly agree" and 43% "agree" with the use of pictures in EFL classrooms to remember new words. These findings highlight that a very large proportion of students (97%) recognized that pictures were effective to be implemented in EFL classrooms to increase their vocabulary. From the open-ended questions, students mentioned that pictures attracted their

attention, and they understood several English words better, as well as when they see a picture, they immediately remember the meaning of a word. As denoted in the field notes, the majority of students showed a better understanding of the meaning of some words, and pictures stimulate students to learn by providing an environment with a positive attitude. On the other hand, a very small proportion of students (3%) "disagreed" with this statement, expressing the difficulty that some words present for them.

A majority of students (95%) believed pictures are beneficial for learning new vocabulary, especially the written form of words. More than a half (50%) "strongly agreed" and 45% "agreed", highlighting the importance of pictures in engaging students and increasing their participation in class. From the open-ended questions, students indicated that they were not able to remember some words before using pictures, and these tools help them keep engaged in their learning. According to the researcher's field notes, the students increase their participation in class with the use of pictures. However, an insignificant minority of the students (5%) "disagreed" with this notion, expressing that it was a little difficult to remember some words just by looking at pictures.

Table 3

Students' perceptions regarding interactive instruction with realia

Statements	SA	A	D	SD
4. The classes were interactive when the teacher used real objects during the English lessons.	58%	42%	0%	0%
5. I noticed an increase in comprehension related to English vocabulary when the teacher used objects that allowed me to use my senses like seeing, hearing and touching.	58%	37%	5%	0%

Note. SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree

As it is presented in Table 3, the majority of the class (58%) "strongly agreed" and around a half of students (42%) "agreed" that the English classes were interactive when the teacher used real objects. These findings demonstrated a positive perception among the whole class (100%) showing that realia was helpful to provide a pleasant environment to learn English vocabulary. From the open-ended

questions, students manifested that the classes were interesting and more dynamic, as well as they paid more attention and they wanted to participate more. As denoted in field notes, students felt motivated to participate actively and they learned more when the teacher used classroom objects.

Moreover, more than a half of students (58%) "strongly agreed" along with under a fifth of students (37%) "agreed" that realia allowed them to use their senses to better understand English vocabulary. These results showed that a significant proportion of the students (95%) affirmed that using real objects was advantageous since students were capable of using their senses to learn new words. From the open-ended questions, students highlighted the importance of realia to increase their concentration and their vocabulary knowledge. From the researcher field notes, the classes were more interactive, students participated more, and they demonstrated a better understanding of new vocabulary. On the other hand, a tiny fraction of the class (5%) "disagreed" with this statement, expressing that they did not use all their senses, just seeing and touching.

Table 4

Students' perceptions regarding the increase of comprehension using graphic organizers

Statements	SA	A	D	SD
6. The structured information presented in the graphic organizers helped me comprehend new vocabulary better than a text.	43%	53%	4%	0%
7. I was able to connect the words with their meaning when the teacher used graphic organizers in class.	48%	44%	8%	0%

Note. SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree

As shown in Table 4, more than a half of the students (53 %) "agreed" and around a half of the students (43%) "strongly agreed" that graphic organizers were very helpful in comprehending new vocabulary because the information presented was clear and organized. These results showed that a significant proportion of the class (96%) acknowledged that graphic organizers were useful to enhance students' comprehension related to English vocabulary. From the open-ended questions,

students suggested that the class was less boring than when long texts are used, since the information in the graphic organizer was summarized and presented in an organized way to understand each part. Based on field notes, students demonstrated a better understanding of English vocabulary by using graphic organizers in class since the information presented was summarized and organized. However, a tiny fraction of students (4%) "disagreed" with this statement, expressing that they got a little bit confused when the teacher used graphic organizers in class. These findings indicated that the information in a graphic organization should be well-organized, clear and contain few words for a better understanding of English vocabulary rather than long texts.

Additionally, just under a half of students (48%) "strongly agreed" with around a half of the class (44%) "agreed" that graphic organizers help them to connect the vocabulary with their meaning. These findings demonstrate that a very large proportion of students (92%) recognized that using graphic organizers was favorable in improving students' vocabulary knowledge regarding the meaning of some words. From the open-ended questions, students expressed that with a graphic organizer they could understand better the meaning of the words since it contained the main ideas of the topic. That is why, was easy for students to comprehend the vocabulary presented with their meaning. The researcher's field notes revealed that since there were pictures and little information in the graphic organizers, the students comprehended the new vocabulary more readily, particularly, the meaning of some words. However, a small percentage of the students (8%) "disagreed" with this statement since they did not like to learn with graphic organizers. These findings revealed that graphic organizers are a useful tool because they show the main aspects of a topic to help students learn more effectively.

Table 5

Students' perceptions regarding engagement and motivation through posters

Statements	SA	A	D	SA
8. The visual elements such as lines, images and words in a poster attracted my attention to learn new words in English.	38%	47%	15%	0%
9. I felt motivated to learn new vocabulary when the teacher used colorful posters in class.	48%	41%	8%	3%

Note. SA = Strongly agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly disagree

As can be seen in Table 5, around a half of students (47%) "agreed" and under a fifth of the class (38%) "strongly agreed" that posters engaged students in learning new vocabulary. These results revealed that a large part of the students (85%) recognized that posters were valuable to keep them engaged in their learning, since they contained different visual elements that attracted their attention to learn new vocabulary. From the open-ended questions, students stated that the classes were interactive since posters were colorful, as well as the majority of the students were paying attention to the class because the visual elements of the posters attracted their attention to learn new words. As denoted in the field notes, students' participation increased, and the majority of the class felt motivated to learn with posters. On the other side, less than a quarter of the students (15%) "disagreed" with this statement since they do not like the poster used in class.

Furthermore, just under a half of the population (48%) "strongly agreed" along with under a fifth of the class (41%) "agreed" that using posters in the classroom motivates students to learn. These results indicated that a significant majority of students (89%) understand that using posters in class was efficacious to increase students' motivation and enthusiasm during English lessons. From the open-ended questions, students mentioned that they felt motivated to learn because the color of the poster caught their attention, as well as that the class was more dynamic, and it was easier to understand the topics when the teacher used posters. Similarly, based on field notes, students participated actively, and they understood better the topics when posters were used in class. On the other hand, a small portion of the students

(8%) "disagreed" and a tiny fraction of the class (3%) "strongly disagreed" with this statement.

5. DISCUSSION

The present research aimed to find out the eighth-grade students' perceptions about the implementation of visual aids to enhance their English vocabulary at a public institution in Loja during the 2022-2023 academic year. This section shows a comparison of the results obtained with some empirical studies by answering the research question, as well as it describes the limitations that were encountered during the execution of the intervention plan.

According to the questionnaire and observation through field notes, it was found that most of the participants had positive perceptions towards using visual aids to enhance their English vocabulary, particularly, the use of various types of visual aids such as pictures, realia, graphic organizers, and posters attracted the students' attention, increased their participation and motivation, and contributed to make the classes more dynamic and interactive. For instance, learners manifested that this strategy was interesting, dynamic, and engaging, which allowed them to increase their attention and participation. These results are also in agreement with Patesan et.al. (2018), who stated that visual aids enable students to make learning more concrete, effective, interesting, inspirational and meaningful. Hence, it can be said that visual aids are a useful strategy to be implemented with eighth-grade students to enhance their vocabulary learning and create an environment where students feel motivated to learn.

Additionally, students pointed out that implementing visual aids, increased their vocabulary knowledge, memory retention skills, comprehension to new topics and most importantly increased their interaction, as well as keeping them engaged in their learning because English lessons were interactive. These findings corroborated what Alamri and Hakami (2022), Birinci and Saricoban (2021), Cruz (2021) and Wiyati and Marlina (2021) reported in their research. All these authors acknowledged that visual aids facilitate students' knowledge, increase their enthusiasm, and help them memorize new vocabulary. Therefore, it can be argued

that students perceived visual aids as an effective strategy for tackling their vocabulary challenges providing a positive learning environment.

Although the study was carried out successfully, it had some limitations including a small sample size and little preservice teachers' experience in action research, making it difficult to determine the unique strategy for vocabulary development. Likewise, the circumstances under which this study was conducted in terms of the participants characteristics and short class periods for the implementation of the intervention plan.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study has revealed that students' perceptions towards the implementation of visual aids to enhance their English vocabulary were mostly positive because they felt motivated as well as being actively involved in the learning process. Moreover, visual aids as a teaching strategy were attractive, dynamic, and enjoyable, which allowed students to increase their interaction in class.

Therefore, visual aids, such as pictures, realia, graphic organizers, and posters, can positively impact students' vocabulary understanding. These aids assisted students in overcoming vocabulary difficulties, attracting attention, increasing engagement, and making classes more dynamic and meaningful. Consequently, implementing visual aids can improve students' vocabulary knowledge and create a motivating learning environment.

Finally, it is recommended that further research on vocabulary with visual aids should be conducted with larger samples to acquire more accurate results. In this way, the study might generate more trustworthy results, and it can be affirmed that the application of visual aids is effective in influencing the development of students' vocabulary knowledge. Likewise, it is highly recommendable to take into consideration more prolongation of time to develop the intervention plan, which can also be developed with other educational levels to validate the positive effects of visual aids strategy to enhance students' vocabulary understanding.

7. CONTRIBUCIÓN DE LOS AUTORES

~ Thaily Fernanda Caillagua Zhanay: Resumen, introducción, marco teórico, recopilación de datos, redacción del artículo, recolección de datos, análisis de resultados, discusión y conclusiones.

~ Marlon Richard Armijos Ramírez: Dirección, supervisión y edición del capítulo de libro.

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