UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN

Carrera de

Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros

Exploring Strategies Employed to Learn Vocabulary by EFL Students from Specific Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups: An Exploratory Study

Trabajo de Titulación previo a la obtención del título de Licenciado/a en Pedagogía del Idioma Inglés

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Febrero, 2025

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TODA LA INFORMACIÓN EXPRESA EN EL PRESENTE TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN ES DE ABSOLUTA RESPONSABILIDAD DEL AUTOR Y TUTOR Y SE ENCUENTRA DEBIDAMENTE AUTORIZADA PARA SU CORRESPONDIENTE PUBLICACIÓN

Agradecimientos y/o dedicatorias

Acknowledgments

I want to thank God for this project, who has given me the strength to finish this journey. I dedicate these years of training to my grandmother, who has supported me and given me her unconditional love. I am grateful to my mother, who has sacrificed a lot so that I can accomplish one more goal in my life. To my entire family, thank you for your love and support.

Besides, I want to thank my friends Alexis, Edison, Israel, Frank, and Cecy, who have always supported me and advised me to improve and not give up during my most difficult moments. I also thank my tutor, Omid Sahranavard, for his invaluable guidance in this project. Finally, I want to thank my thesis partner and friend, Erika. She has always been dedicated and responsible. During our time together, she understood and supported me.

Andrés Paida

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, who has guided and encouraged me in my most difficult moments, allowing me to fulfill one more goal in my life. I dedicate this important research to my dear parents, Segundo and Lilian, who have always supported and motivated me in my highest and lowest moments in every possible way. To my sister Ximena and my little brother Marlon, for inspiring me during this process. Also, I want to express my thanks to my tutor, Mgtr. Omid for his help and patience. Finally, to Andrés, my thesis partner, I want to express my gratitude for his invaluable friendship, patience, and unwavering support and for working with me throughout this long journey.

Erika Rea

Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo pretende determinar las estrategias aplicadas por estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) de diversos grupos étnicos para aprender vocabulario en inglés. Utilizando un diseño de investigación exploratorio, este estudio utilizó entrevistas semiestructuradas para identificar las estrategias de aprendizaje, los retos, las oportunidades de siete estudiantes de EFL de cuatro grupos étnicos diferentes: Mestizo, Indígena, Afrodescendiente y Montubio que estudian la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros en una universidad de Ecuador. Las entrevistas semiestructuradas se centraron en los retos y oportunidades del aprendizaje del vocabulario en inglés, sus herramientas y estrategias para aprender el vocabulario de la lengua meta. Los resultados destacaron las principales estrategias de aprendizaje empleadas por estudiantes de diferentes etnias. Además, se aborda el proceso consciente e inconsciente del aprendizaje de vocabulario. Como resultado, los participantes informaron de que utilizaban diversas estrategias, como la aplicación del vocabulario, la toma de notas, la contextualización, la memorización, la repetición, el uso de elementos visuales, etc. Las estrategias aplicadas por los participantes fueron predominantemente cognitivas y metacognitivas. Los resultados del estudio sugieren que pueden emplearse enfoques personalizados, inclusivos y potenciados por la tecnología para apoyar a alumnos diversos teniendo en cuenta su preferencia y antecedentes culturales.

Palabras claves: Estrategias de aprendizaje, Vocabulario, Grupos étnicos.

Abstract

This qualitative study aimed to determine the strategies implemented by English as a foreign language (EFL) student of diverse ethnic groups to learn vocabulary in English. By utilizing an exploratory research design, this study used semi-structured interviews to identify the learning strategies, challenges, and opportunities of seven EFL students from four different ethnic groups: Mestizo, Indigenous, Afrodescendant, and Montubio who were studying Pedagogy of National and Foreign Language major at a university in Ecuador. The semi-structured interviews focused on the challenges and opportunities of learning English vocabulary, their tools, and strategies to approach the vocabulary of the target language. The findings underscore the principal learning strategies that students from different ethnicities employ and reveal the use of a variety of strategies, such as vocabulary application, note-taking, contextualization, memorization, repetition, and the use of visuals. The strategies implemented by the participants were predominantly cognitive and metacognitive. The study's results suggested that personalized, inclusive, and technology-enhanced approaches can be employed to support diverse learners by considering students' preferences and cultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Learning strategies, Vocabulary, Ethnic groups.

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Introduction

1.1 Context

Vocabulary learning is a critical aspect of language learning, serving as the foundation for communication and comprehension. For Ecuadorian students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, learning English vocabulary goes beyond memorizing words; it involves the challenge of aligning new linguistic concepts with their cultural and linguistic identities. Soomro et al. (2015) highlight the importance of cultural understanding in language use, noting that "without properly understanding the cultural setting and social behavior of language use, it leads to misinterpretation and breakdown in language communication" (p. 3). For students from various ethnic backgrounds in Ecuador, this cultural dimension shapes their approach to vocabulary learning and their overall language comprehension, making vocabulary learning not only a linguistic process but also an intercultural one.

Furthermore, according to Keumala et al. (2019), learning a foreign language like English requires an adaptation process in which learners navigate a new academic and social system. This process is influenced by multiple factors, including culture, critical to learners' EFL success. To learn a foreign language, they must adapt to a new academic and social environment, often distancing themselves from their traditions and cultural norms. Moreover, this adaptation is relevant in Ecuador, a country rich in cultural diversity, where students often travel from various cities and regions to study.

1.2 Identification of the research problem

In Ecuador, “98,7% of citizens speak Spanish; 3,9% speak an indigenous language; 2,8% foreign language; and 0,1% communicate through sign languages” (Censo Ecuador, 2022). These statistics highlight the countries’ linguistic and cultural diversity. Ecuador is not only multilingual but also home to a variety of ethnicities. This diversity is reflected in educational settings, where students from different ethnic backgrounds share the same classroom and have the opportunity to learn from one another. However, the dynamic in English classrooms is more complex as students learn a foreign language.

As Burgin and Daniel (2023) note, the “Ecuadorian educational system is challenged to understand and address the cultural diversity presented in the nation’s classrooms” (p.106). In the field of English as a foreign language, researchers such as Bucklewe and Fishman (2011), González et al. (2005), and Ruiz (1984), as cited in Burgin and Daniel (2023), emphasize the importance of incorporating students’ cultural and linguistic backgrounds into teaching practices. They argue that “students’ familiar backgrounds, their languages and the norms of their communities, are treasure troves for future teachers who know that investigating learners’ out of school experiences will help the teacher improve their curriculum and methods for ELT” (p. 15).

According to Yanza et al. (2024), students in Ecuador often struggle with vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation in English. Bridging strategies that consider students’ cultural and cognitive experiences can help address these challenges. By incorporating students’ first languages into teaching practices, such as translating English words into their mother tongue, teachers can create more inclusive learning environments and support student progress, for these bridging strategies are helpful for them.

The limited research on how ethnic groups in Ecuador, such as Mestizo, Afro-Ecuadorian, Montubio, and Indigenous populations, approach English vocabulary learning underscores the significance of this investigation. In this regard, Ecuador's multilingual and multicultural context is particularly relevant for studying language learning. Thus, this study on vocabulary learning because, as Al-Khasawneh (2013) points out, “learners of second or foreign language recognize the importance of words in their learning and the difficulties they might face in communication purposes due to the limited amount of words” (p.14). Vocabulary mastery requires more than memorizing a list of words; it involves understanding meanings, forms, and appropriate usage in various contexts.

Given the importance of vocabulary learning and potential cultural influences on it, this study sought to find an answer to the following question:

RQ: How do different Ecuadorian ethnic groups learn vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language?

1.3 Importance of the study

This exploratory study is significant because limited research exists on how Ecuadorian ethnic groups (e.g., Mestizos, Montubios, Indigenous, and Afrodescendants) approach vocabulary learning in English as a foreign language. A review of existing literature and repositories from Ecuadorian universities reveals limited information on this topic.

With adequate time management, an appropriate instrument, and solid data analysis, this study can significantly contribute to understanding how specific ethnic groups learn English vocabulary. It will also provide new insights into the English teaching field, enabling teachers to

consider students' backgrounds and effectively address their needs to improve their English learning process.

Finally, vocabulary was chosen as the focus instead of other components when learning English because studying a foreign language is a foundational part that enables learners to communicate, write, construct sentences, and understand texts and conversations. As Pan & Xu (2011) remarked, “Vocabulary is one of the most essential parts, along with phonetics/pronunciation and grammar, required to learn a foreign language” (as cited in Afzal, 2019, p. 82). Without vocabulary, proficiency in other language skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, cannot be achieved, making it a critical area to study.

1.4 General objective and specific objectives

1.4.1 General objective:

To determine the strategies implemented by EFL students of diverse ethnic groups to learn vocabulary in English.

1.4.2 Specific objectives:

To recognize the challenges and opportunities encountered by EFL students of diverse ethnic groups in learning English vocabulary.

To describe the tools and resources EFL students use to learn English vocabulary.

2. Literature Review

This section displays an outline of the theoretical framework that supports this study. It will provide essential insights into previous studies, language learning strategies, ethnicities, and relevant theories that are critical for the development of this investigation.

2.1 Previous studies

A study conducted by Morales and Díaz in 2017 demonstrates the diversity of students from different ethnicities and cultures in Ecuador. Therefore, their objective is to search for interferences in the Shuar Chicham language that affect the structuring of grammatical sentences in English and how this incidence occurs. For this study, participants were selected through a survey that sought students with "Shuar" mother tongue with open-ended questions. Based on the study, 31 participants were selected. After that, a 10-week observation of the participants was initiated, and twenty observation records were obtained. In the results, they found that there are grammatical interferences from the Shuar Chicham that affect the structuring of grammatical sentences in the simple present tense of the English language.

Based on this study, the authors highlighted the challenges and complexities faced by Shuar-speaking students in Ecuador when learning English. The results indicate that these students often experience difficulties adapting to the grammatical structures of English, leading to errors in sentence construction. This finding aligns with the current study's objective of examining learners' challenges in mastering grammatical structures. Additionally, the results connect to the present research by suggesting a relationship between these structural challenges and vocabulary learning, particularly in how participants interpret and learn new words.

Another study conducted in Indonesia by Sari, Fons, Van de Vijver, and Bender in 2019 sought the role of language for sociocultural adjustment among adolescents from both dominant and non-dominant minority groups who are bilinguals and have a long history of settlement. Their participants were 517 adolescents: 214 Javanese respondents, 108 Toraja respondents, and 195 Chinese respondents. The authors used a questionnaire, a picture naming test, and a scale to collect the different data. Their results revealed that vocabulary knowledge in Bahasa Indonesia was

significantly associated with sociocultural adjustments. The authors of this study demonstrate how linguistic changes in multilingual societies can affect cultural integration, especially in the case of bilingual individuals from diverse backgrounds.

This study contrasts with the findings of Morales and Diaz (2017), who explored how language influences the process of learning English. In comparison, Sari et al. (2019) examined the experiences of ethnic groups through a sociocultural perspective, focusing on how cultural and social contexts impact learning. Similarly, the current study highlights how participants' sociocultural experiences shape their perceptions. This approach acknowledges that understanding and learning new words can be based on students' regionalism, providing a holistic view of vocabulary learning.

A different study conducted in Indonesia by Lestari and Wahyudin in 2020 aimed to explore the language learning strategies used by students who take English Literature study programs in English as a foreign language (EFL) setting. The study involved 76 participants; the authors used a questionnaire to gather data. This research showed that metacognitive strategies are the most frequently used strategy, followed by social and compensation strategies, while affective strategies are the least used by students. Besides, the authors highlighted that it was found that the learning atmosphere was supportive of them and that their peers assisted them in mastering the target language. The authors emphasized that students having the right and supportive environment can help them have better language learning. This is connected to the present study, which considers the participants' strategies to learn vocabulary and retain information. However, despite the results of the survey conducted by Lestari and Wahyudin (2020), which only focuses on

learning strategies, it still presents a gap related to the cultural background of the participants, such as ethnicity, which this study pretends to answer with its exploration.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are "actions taken by learners to help their learning, to make the learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable. The students should know what learning strategies are suitable to master the skill" (Oxford, 1990, as cited in Sari et al., p.3, 2021). From that perspective, students master different skills based on their learning strategies. Therefore, these are thoroughly selected to be used daily. Thus, they enjoy their learning process using the approach that most suits their needs. In this regard, Rebecca Oxford (1990), as cited in Virkkula and Nissilä, p.117, (2017) divided language learning strategies into direct and indirect "direct ones act in the situation of learning and its outcomes; indirect one influence in the background."

Figure 1

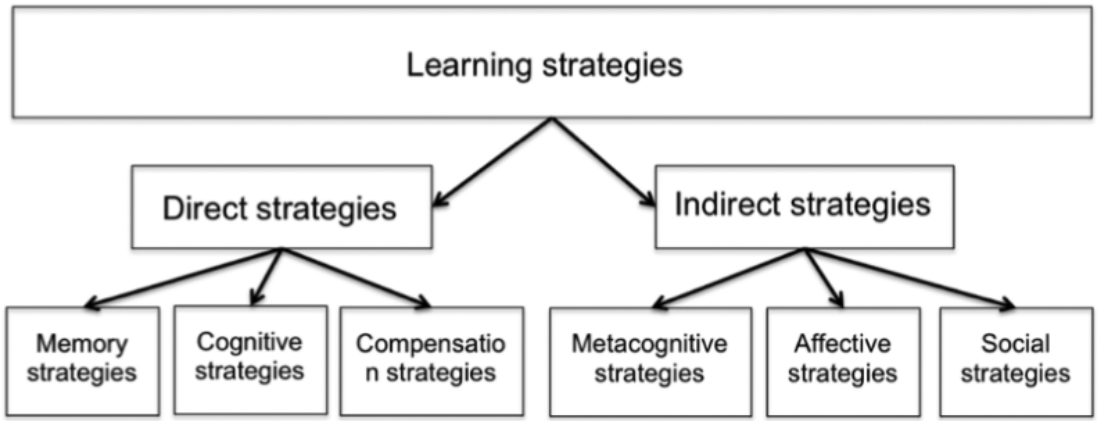


Figure 1. *Classification of language learning strategies* (Oxford, 1990, as cited in Virkkula & Nissilä, 2017).

According to Hardan (2013, p.11), memory strategies allow students to remember and store information by creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, and reviewing. Meanwhile, cognitive strategies include the process of reasoning, analyzing, and reaching conclusions, allowing students to manipulate the target language. Likewise, he mentions that compensation strategies fill the gaps encountered when learning a language, thus using the language by writing and speaking it. Moreover, metacognitive strategies aid students in organizing their learning process by "centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating their learning" (Hardan, 2013, p.11). Learners manage their learning by analyzing which strategies help them and which should be changed, as those might not suit their learning style. In addition, the affective strategies assist students with emotions and motivation, meaning learners know how to handle and control their feelings. Finally, he mentions that social strategies involve students in social activities or settings where the target language can be used and practiced while asking questions and cooperating with others.

As noted, there are different strategies from which students can learn vocabulary. The choice of using any strategy by the student will depend on their needs and how it suits them. A strategy may be helpful for them for specific topics; however, it is possible that the same strategy does not work with a different topic, and this happens with many students in a real classroom. This is where the importance of vocabulary learning strategies relies on; with support of the results of the research of Ghalebi, Sadighi, and Bagheri, as quoted in Wahyudin et al. (2021, p.103) found that "vocabulary learning strategies can also expose individual differences in vocabulary learning

among students, and motivate EFL educators and curriculum designers to design materials and activities which would facilitate learners in improving their vocabulary skill." In other words, students have unique and varied ways of learning vocabulary, and that can be revealed when analyzing their strategies. This leads educators to understand those differences and design personalized methods to make vocabulary learning enjoyable and effective for students.

2.2.2 Vocabulary in English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

Learning vocabulary represents one of the most important skills, and it is necessary for learning the English Language. Talking about the importance of vocabulary is related to communicating with other people using a language. "Vocabulary is the total number of words in a language that supports the speaker in communication" (Salawazo et al., 2020). The quote implies that a rich vocabulary provides the linguistic resources necessary for effective communication. Besides, vocabulary learning often occurs in an "accidental" way, where students learn the words due to some language exposure.

According to Setiyaningsih (2009), as cited in Salawazo (2020, p.471), "vocabulary is all the words that are received by persons incidentally or intentionally through indirect exposure to words explicitly instruction to a specific word and word learning strategy." This statement highlights that people learn words indirectly by encountering them in various contexts through reading, listening, and social interactions. In other cases, vocabulary learning also occurs through direct learning methods when employing a method or strategy to memorize or apply new words.

Vocabulary is key when learning a language. It allows learners to communicate effectively, as they must store all the words needed to express themselves in any situation. Therefore, according to Ghalebi et al. (2020), vocabulary development is multifaceted. It includes knowledge of word

meanings, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical properties, connotations, morphological options, and semantic associations.

Foreign language learners must understand what is involved beyond associating the word with its meaning, which also refers to word interpretation. Learners must comprehend that the word in its basic form varies according to what is wanted to be communicated, depending on the context. Chiew and Ismail (2021) highlighted that "learning sufficient words to build a language learner's mental lexicon is a critical aspect, especially while learning a second language" (p.1300). Thus, learning a new language will always depend on how much vocabulary is known, which is foundational when learning a foreign language.

2.2.3 Importance of Vocabulary Learning in EFL Education

Vocabulary learning is considered essential for education but is still very important for foreign language learning, especially for its learners. While studying a foreign language, students have a limited knowledge of words, and it is difficult to understand specific meanings and even confuse them. According to Heubener (1965), as cited in Rohmatillah (2017), "learning of vocabulary is based on the formation of specific habits. Since this involves the association of symbols and their meaning, it is clear that an enrichment of the word's meaning is as important as its frequent repetition" (p.72). According to the quote, learners should understand the concept of the foreign word or phrase as they can relate to words in their native language and possibly have equivalent words and different meanings.

Learning new words will never be easy for foreign language learners, and constant use of new words is necessary to avoid forgetting or re-studying them. Ulashevna and Bakhtiyorovna (2022) state, "An explicit teaching and learning of vocabulary is essential, especially when learning

a new language is occurring and learners have to deal with unfamiliar vocabulary" (p.4). Educators need to focus on teaching vocabulary intentionally and clearly. Students slowly absorb words and fully integrate them into each student's "word stock."

Vocabulary is learning a list of words and recognizing and applying them in the four primary language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening and speaking: These two skills are highly interrelated and work simultaneously in real-life situations. So, the integration of the two aims to foster effective oral communication. This integration will ensure real-life and purposeful communication. Then, reading and writing form a strong relationship with each other as skills. "They are tools for effective written communication" (Sadiku, 2015, p.29). In addition, it is important to consider that by learning vocabulary, students will have a comprehensive knowledge of how to recognize and apply the words in the four primary English skills in different contexts, such as productive or receptive.

2.2.4 Ethnicity and Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary will allow learners to communicate accurately in both written and spoken forms once they have completely understood the meaning and use of the new word. As Afzal (2019, p.81) states, "Proficiency in the English language depends on the knowledge of its vocabulary possessed by second and foreign language learners and even the native speakers." Hence, to become proficient in a foreign language, it is necessary to have established vocabulary knowledge in second language learners or native speakers.

Vocabulary does not stand alone. It has a strong link with culture, as Doolittle (1996) illustrates: "If we were all to agree to call a banana a "watch," a banana would become a watch. Thus, the words we learn and create are all dependent upon "we," that is, the culture in which we

live" (p.1). This understanding highlights the importance of culture in shaping language and how we perceive and interact with the world; therefore, language is a powerful social tool that reflects and shapes our collective reality.

Morales and Díaz (2017) explain linguistic interference as "errors that are made when practicing a second language due to contact with the mother tongue" (p.3). Students will struggle to learn vocabulary because these linguistic interferences will cause them to employ components of their mother tongue when writing or speaking.

2.2.5 Sociocultural approach to teaching and learning

This section explores Vygotsky's sociocultural approach to teaching and learning, a framework that acknowledges human diversity and the impact of social and historical contexts on how individuals learn. Central to Vygotsky's theory is the idea that meaning is socially constructive and internalized to everyday language use (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2013, p. 117,132). Vygotsky (1987) argues that language is never a perfect reflection of an individual's thoughts, as words have different meanings in various social and cultural contexts, influencing how learners interpret and use them. In that account, this perspective is relevant in the context of English as foreign language learners bring their unique cultural backgrounds and world views into their language learning process.

Learners get involved in a variety of activities and internalize the effect of working with others; therefore, they acquire new strategies and knowledge of the world and culture (Scott & Palincsar, 2013, p.1). When students from different ethnic backgrounds work together, they bring distinct cultural insights, language practices, and experiences that enrich their learning environment. This social interaction and vocabulary learning becomes paramount in multicultural

classrooms as this allows learners to internalize the information better by exchanging insights on language learning strategies and providing context of words, especially when they are learning a foreign language. Vygotsky (1987) also emphasizes that to learn a second language, we first have to master our first language as we understand those words based on how we know them in our native language (Kilag et al., 2024, p.4).

On that account, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory "will afford teachers and learners the pursuit of goals consistent with the best possible personalized learning" (Ballard & Butler, 2011, p.24). The social-cultural theory enhances students' comprehension by allowing them to use their native language while learning English as a foreign language. This can foster students' accurate understanding of complex concepts or vocabulary, scaffold learning experiences, and increase their motivation and engagement to learn. To accomplish that, "teachers assist students in making connections between new knowledge and pre-existing structures using the scaffolding approach" (Sarmiento et al.,2022, p.4); in this way, teachers support learners until they gradually become independent. Hence, this assistance occurs when educators help students build on their prior knowledge, in this case, their mother tongue, to connect with the target language they are learning to understand it better.

2.2.6 Incidental learning

Incidental learning is a natural process where students can learn something unplanned. In the case of EFL, incidental learning occurs through exposure to the language in daily life situations, especially in the classroom, according to Wu and Caceda (2024). "When students focus on understanding a task within the lesson, the context can help students grasp the vocabulary encountered incidentally" (p.23). Regarding the quote, when students are immersed in completing

a task, they are not concentrating on learning new words or grammar rules. Instead, their focus is on achieving the communicative or cognitive goals of the task.

However, the effectiveness of incidental learning depends on several factors, such as the frequency of exposure and the complexity of the material. Teng (2023) states, “Students need exposure to input; through that exposure, they are likely to make small gains in knowledge” (p.157). Students need ongoing opportunities to interact with the new language in various contexts. Furthermore, for L2 students’ task-based or project-based activities can provide natural contexts, creating a setting where students are actively exposed to the language.

This approach enables students to pick up new vocabulary through activities like reading, listening, or visual media. Nevertheless, incidental learning does not always occur in this way; it also occurs when a conscious process is applied when wanting to learn a new word from those activities mentioned above. Ender (2016), as cited in Lee (2023), mentioned the following: “Incidental vocabulary acquisition can occur both explicitly and implicitly; however, when incidental vocabulary acquisition occurs through an explicit cognitive learning process, such as direct attention to vocabulary items and a conscious effort to learn, the effect becomes greater” (p.276). Based on the author’s words, when students are actively focused on new words, they are not only passively absorbing information. Instead, they engage in learning vocabulary in a way that can lead to deeper understanding and retention.

Conversely, in this section, learning tools are also present during incidental learning, as Iravi and Malmir (2023) mentioned. These are called lexical applications, which include “technology-mediated incidental learning, including the role of various types, such as game apps and movies/videos” (p.4). These tools are within incidental learning as students are not watching

videos, movies, or reading blogs, just the sole focus of learning vocabulary but as a means of entertainment.

2.2.7 Explicit learning

Unlike incidental learning, explicit learning refers to the conscious process of acquiring or learning new knowledge. Furthermore, EFL students know what they are learning and understand the new concepts or words. “Explicit learning denotes a learning process with predetermined intention and awareness of the material learnt” (Rebuschat, 2015, as cited in Zólyomi, 2021, p.85). According to the quote, learners' awareness shapes their experience of learning vocabulary or grammar rules and can apply them more accurately in real-life situations.

Explicit learning refers to the student’s intention and conscious ability to become proficient in a subject. According to Liu (2021), “It involves memorizing a series of successive facts and thus demands heavily on working memory” (p.8). EFL students who apply explicit learning involve metacognitive strategies, such as reflecting on their learning process. In addition, this process can lead to long-term retention since students are not only memorizing the words or grammar structures but are also forming a clear and structured representation of the material.

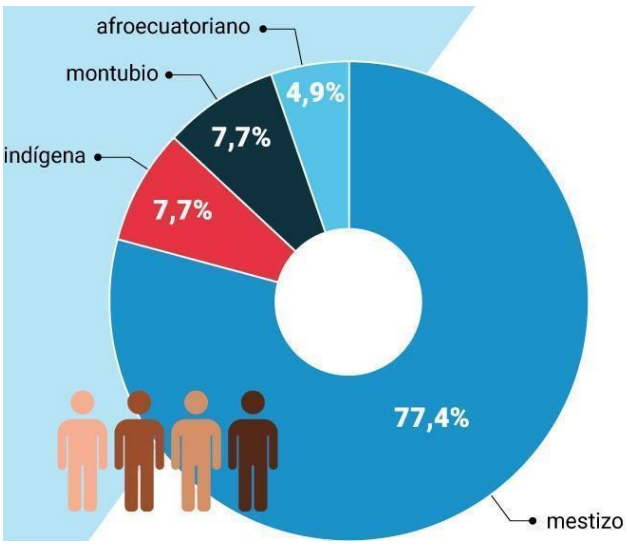
This approach to learning is often contrasted with incidental learning, as mentioned before, which is the unconscious learning process. In explicit learning, students are expected to pay attention to different rules. An example is provided by Roehr-Brackin (2022): “For instance, the learner may look for regularities in the linguistic input in order to identify systematic patterns, rules, or concepts that capture these regularities” (p.69). When students learn a new word, they not only have to memorize the word and its definition, but they also have to recognize and use the word in different contexts.

2.2.8 An overview of Montubio, Afro-Ecuadorian, Mestizo, Indigenous ethnics group in Ecuador

This study was conducted in Ecuador, located in Latin America, and is characterized by its different regions offering unique cultures. Ecuador is multicultural due to its four regions: Galapagos Island, Coast, Andes, and Amazon. According to Gonzalez and Reyes (2018), "the term multicultural refers to the spatial and temporal coexistence of different cultures and subcultures" (p.34). Many people from all regions have traveled from their residences to study at their preferred universities. This has allowed them to coexist with people with different preferences when learning in general and sharing their ideas, according to the census data retrieved from INEC (2022). Among the 16,938,986 people registered in the census, 77.5% consider themselves Mestizos, 7.7% Indigenous, 7.7% Montubios, 4.8% Afro-Ecuadorian, and 2.2% Whites (Figure 1).

Figure 2

Percentages of the different ethnic groups of Ecuador.



Note: This image, summarizing the percentages of ethnicities in Ecuador, was created by A. Noboa (2023). Adapted from "Primicias". Copyright 2024.

For this study, it is important to mention Lev Vygotsky, as quoted in Ameri (2020), who argued that "learner's complex forms of thinking have their origins in the learner's social interactions [through mediation] rather than in the learner's private explorations." This means that each student will step out of their comfort zone to apply their knowledge. Since university students come from these different regions and are of different ethnicities, they will be able to experience different contexts and have close relationships with each other by learning from their interactions.

Based on the Censo 2022, the Coast region has these ethnicities: Tschila, Montubios, and Afro-Ecuadorians. The Andes or Highlands region encompasses the following ethnicities: Cañari, Cayambi, Otavalo, Saraguro, Mestizos, and others. Meanwhile, in the Amazon region, the ethnicities are Kichwa, Shuar, and Indigenous. Lastly, Galapagos Island has diverse ethnicities such as Indigenous, White, and Afro-Ecuadorian (INEC, 2022). The demographic data obtained from the census shows why Ecuador is a multicultural country with all the above-mentioned ethnic groups living together.

3. Methodology

3.1 Type of research

This study intended to use a qualitative method. "It is a useful method in studying a phenomenon with limited accessible information as its nature is exploratory. Thus, the qualitative approach can discover new insights and ideas and generate new theories" (Taherdoost, 2022, p.54). A qualitative approach allows in-depth analysis by interpreting how backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives shape the participants' experiences. Besides, this approach fits in the study since it aims to explore the different experiences of learning vocabulary by using semi-structured interviews.

3.2 Research design

This paper is an exploratory design focused on the qualitative nature of gathering and analyzing data, especially in a poorly studied area. According to Swedberg (2020) an exploratory study "consists of an attempt to discover something new and interesting, by working your way through a research topic" (p.17). However, this author adds that this type of research is risky since it is not possible to know in advance whether something new will come out of it. Based on this, it is understood that the studies that use this research design are due to the limited information available or because the studies have not been investigated in depth, to obtain new insights about specific phenomena.

As stated in the name of the study design, we make exclusive use of the qualitative method since, according to Brink (1998), an exploratory design uses qualitative collection methods, in light of which design is flexible in purpose. It permits researchers to discover new phenomena and gain insights into the phenomena under exploration.

This exploratory design study allowed us to obtain rich and in-depth data through semi-structured interviews, which enabled us to understand how these ethnic groups approach vocabulary. Overall, this study did not involve experimenting or implementation, as we researchers aimed not to manipulate or change any factors that would directly affect the validity and reliability of the study.

3.3 Research Participants

This study was conducted with seven Ecuadorian university students of Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages. The sample consisted of two students per 3 ethnicities (Mestizo, Indigenous, Montubio), and 1 for another (Afrodescendant). In addition, the participants were four males and three females aged 19-22. Montubio participants are from Guayas and El Oro. One

Montubio participant was in 7th semester with a B2 level. The second Montubio participant was in 2nd semester and had an A2 level. The Afro-Ecuadorian participant is from Guayas, and she was in the 2nd semester with an A2 level. Mestizo participants are from Azuay and Guayas. One Mestizo participant was in 5th semester with a B1 level. The other Mestizo participant was in 8th semester with a C1 level. Indigenous participants are from Napo and Morona Santiago; both were in 5th semester and had a B1 level. Only those four ethnicities and seven students were considered because, in the English major, there was not a wide range of ethnicities to work with. It is important to add that the students selected for this study identified themselves with their ethnicities since it is paramount to state that anyone must not be identified with such ethnicity just by considering their appearance, language, or any feature. They are the only ones who can identify themselves, as mentioned in the organic law of culture LOC (2016) (as cited in Sánchez, 2022, p.8), which is why our participants were selected according to the ethnicity they identify with.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

For this exploratory design, semi-structured interviews were used to obtain the necessary data on how students from different ethnic groups learn vocabulary. In a semi-structured interview, "the interviewer is free to base on a guide of issues or questions, and the interviewer is free to introduce additional questions to clarify concepts or obtain more information on the desired topics" (Hernández et al., 2020, p. 418). This means that semi-structured interviews allow for obtaining more in-depth information or help clarify certain doubts in the participants' answers. In addition, the semi-structured interviews were carried out in Spanish to have clear and in-depth answers from the participants.

A semi-structured interview is the most suitable for this study since it "permits interviews to be focused while still giving the investigator the autonomy to explore pertinent ideas that may come up in the course of the interview" (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p.3). Namely, when listening to a statement important for the study, more questions can be added to gather in-depth information that will contribute to conclusions. Additionally, for this study, the interviews were carried out face to face since they allowed us to see the participants, take notes of different reactions, and use visual cues to categorize relevant information. For that reason, these interviews are key to having a deep analysis of data not only based on the interviewee's words but also to be able to analyze the attitude or expressions that the participant has at the time of the interviews.

3.5 Research procedure

This study aimed to identify the strategies implemented by EFL students of diverse ethnic groups to improve their English vocabulary learning. The procedure began with a review of the literature that was divided into two sections: English vocabulary learning and the second section Ethnicity. The first section contains information that involves approaches, terms, and definitions related to learning vocabulary. The second section reviews literature that is more focused on contextualizing the four ethnic groups (Mestizo, Afro-Ecuadorian, Indigenous, Montubio). In order to collect data, a process was followed, starting with the recognition of the participants and continuing until the application of the instrument.

Firstly, information was requested from the general secretary of the university to which the participants belonged in order to start the selection process based on the ethnicities they identify with. Once the number of participants was determined based on ethnicity, they were contacted, informed about the study, and asked to participate. For this, Whatsapp was used to have the first

contact with each participant before meeting them face to face. Once participants agreed to participate in the study, they were located to sign a consent letter along with a more detailed explanation of the study.

After that, the participants agreed on a specific schedule. Once the schedule was established, the seven semi-structured interviews were conducted in a control room. The interviews contained questions based on their experiences and strategies about how the participants learn vocabulary and how the communities of each ethnic group view the importance of the language. Besides, the questions were more explicitly focused on the vocabulary learning process of each participant.

In order to have better control of the data obtained and to make them meaningful for the study, each interview was coded after the transcription process. It is important to highlight that the transcriptions were made after the end of each interview.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis followed a series of steps to analyze and organize the data. First, the researchers read the transcriptions from the interviews, which allowed them to gain a deeper understanding by identifying words, patterns, or phrases. Coding was also important to organize the data obtained.

The coding process began with the MAXQDA software, which is designed for qualitative research. This software allows efficient data exploration, importation, and analysis. Based on the participants' responses, MAXQDA allowed the study to identify emerging themes or patterns.

In addition, an inductive approach was used in this study. “Inductive analysis involves reading through the data and identifying codes, categories, patterns, and themes as they emerge”

(Saldaña & Omasta, 2017; Miles et al., 2020, as cited in Bingham, 2023, p2). For the coding process, this kind of analysis helps to build the codes by a detailed examination of the data, allowing adjustment to the data analysis based on emerging findings.

Descriptive coding was also used to code the interviews. According to Saladaña (2013), "Descriptive Coding summarizes in a word or short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data" (p.87). This coding type allowed the researchers to create codes based on words or phrases related to the study's objectives.

Consequently, the main objective of the semi-structured interviews was to obtain information about the methods and strategies participants use to learn vocabulary in English. The information gathered was invaluable since it supported the study's interpretation of the data and addressed the research objective.

4. Results and discussion

In this section, the findings obtained are organized by themes and different categories, and their corresponding codes are shown to provide a logical way to display the results.

From the interviews, eight themes arose from the data analysis. These include Challenges to learn vocabulary, Opportunities to learn vocabulary, Incidental and Explicit Learning, learning strategies, learning tools, and Strategies used to overcome different challenges. These themes contribute to understanding how these students learn vocabulary and the strategies they use for different situations. In order to keep the participants anonymous, it was decided to assign them the following codes to refer to them in this section: MP1 (Mestizo Participant 1), MP2 (Mestizo

Participant 2), IP1 (Indigenous Participant 1), IP2 (Indigenous Participant 2), AP1 (Afrodescendant Participant 1), MOP1 (Montubio Participant 1), MOP2 (Montubio Participant 2).

4.1 Challenges of Vocabulary Learning

As represented in Figure 3 below, the data collected through the interview revealed the different challenges when learning vocabulary, especially when the word does not have a literal translation into Spanish, as mentioned by MP2: “Also, maybe there are words that do not translate literally into Spanish. So, it is a bit difficult to understand in which context to use it”. Continuing with the following category of words with similar sounds, AP1 found difficulties when different words have a similar sound or a similar pronunciation: “But there are times when words do sound similar, so it gets a little complicated.” In the case of different meaning issues, IP1 expressed that for him when a word has different meanings or it can be used as an adjective, noun, etc. Those distinctions make a word difficult to learn. He shared the following idea: “The biggest challenge would be, again, words with multiple meanings. For example, some words appear to be in a participle but are actually adjectives”.

Additionally, in the category of pronunciation issues, another participant, MP2, shared that this issue for her is because of her place of birth, making it difficult to pronounce certain sounds:

> I mean, in my case, well, I have origins; well, I was born on the Coast, so I do have a little difficulty with some pronunciations, but it's not too much either. For example, the pronunciation of S-H and C-H is a little difficult for me.

However, most of the challenges are not only based on pronunciation or meaning issues for IP2 and AP1. They have problems in learning vocabulary due to low-quality learning in High schools. IP2 stated the following: “When I was in high school, I didn't have the opportunity to have

this quality education, I cannot lie. The teachers only taught grammar, the usual, traditional education". Writing recall is a challenge that participants usually face when learning vocabulary. MOP1 and AP1 highlighted that it is easier to remember how to pronounce words but not how to write them. MOP1 said: "There are words that are sometimes difficult to remember how to spell. And I remember how they are pronounced, but not how they are spelled".

Moreover, challenges such as writing, spelling, meaning, and pronunciation issues with the words were common challenges identified through the interviews. However, these spelling and pronunciation challenges are not only common in participants' view but in general as it is similar to Afzal (2019); where he pointed out that vocabulary learning is indeed challenging, particularly for non-native speakers of English who face problems relating to meanings of new words, spelling, pronunciation, correct use of words, guessing meaning through the context, and so on. This is reflected in participants' words, where they mainly have problems finding direct equivalents, making it impossible to guess the meaning through context. Besides, another common challenge for participants is the pronunciation of words since some English words sound similar, for example: "Eyes" and "Ice," but in particular, Spanish speakers struggle to pronounce Z and C. Because English has a complex phonetic system. Sari., et al. (2019) reveal how linguistic changes in multilingual societies can affect cultural integration, especially for bilingual individuals from diverse backgrounds. This result is related to the participant's experience when having problems with pronouncing certain sounds, such as S-H or C-H, since the participant's region has a combination of sounds that are even different and pronounced faster than other regions.

Figure 3

Participants' challenges when learning vocabulary.



4.2 Opportunities for Vocabulary Learning

According to Figure 4 below, some opportunities were sustained based on participants' beliefs when learning English vocabulary. As shown in Figure 4, participants shared their ideas about different opportunities for learning English vocabulary. Where for the first category of job opportunities, AP1 expressed that for her and her community, it is a significant opportunity to have better jobs:

> I would say that it could be important because it also gives them many job opportunities, maybe in my ethnic group people do not have many possibilities to work, because of racism or many external factors, so I think that studying English or having a help, we could say that it is English, gives them doors to many other jobs or that they can have better stability.

A similar opinion was shared by MOP2, where he expressed that for his community, English can be beneficial to expand their business: "Maybe it is something important, since many of them spend the farms producing bananas, and they want to try to make the farms produce more, and based on this English, they can reach other businesses abroad."

In this section, we will learn more about cultures IP2. He sees learning vocabulary as a way to explore different cultures: “Well, I think it is important to learn English because, as I just mentioned, it opens doors, especially because you can get to know other cultures.” Furthermore, participants see learning vocabulary as an opportunity to foster their comprehension. In fact, MOP1 said:

> Yes. When I learn new words, it makes it easier for me to understand. Maybe a video, a word that you hear and you say, ah, ok, I learned this word, and I know what it means. Before, you didn't understand the whole context, but you understood it in general. But now you understand more specific details, or you understand the general idea. That is the whole idea without skipping things that maybe you wouldn't have known because you didn't know the vocabulary.

The travel opportunities category has similar points of view, where MP1 shared the following opinion: “Yes, and also, it could be another door to other countries because English is also considered one of the first world languages.” Besides, participants see the importance of learning vocabulary since it helps to develop better communication, as can be seen in the category of communicate better where AP1 expressed:

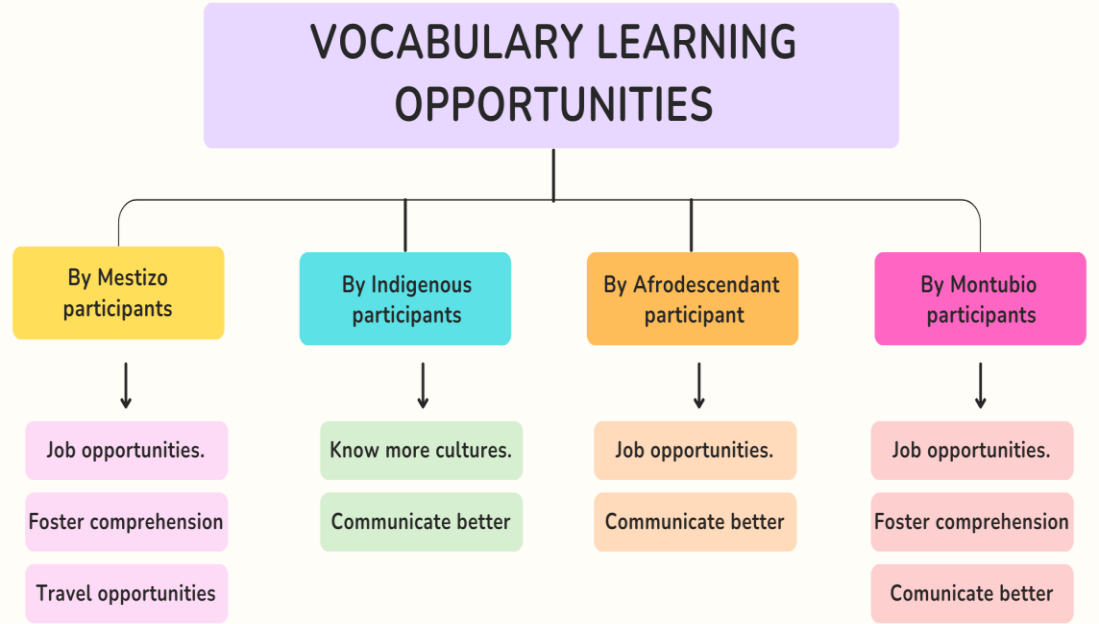
> Of course. Because I have been able to establish better conversations with people, for example, I work in customer service and many times on vacation. [...] I live in Azogues, Azogues is a city where many gringos vacation, as well as in Cuenca, so in my job, in the vacations too many people came from somewhere else. So, maybe it helped me to have a better conversation, and it also helped them to understand the menu or something that they wanted in specific.

The data revealed various opportunities participants perceive when learning English vocabulary, such as job and travel opportunities, comprehension, and communication improvements. Most of these opportunities show the benefits for participants when improving their language skills, presenting how vocabulary learning extends beyond linguistic competencies. Al-Khasawneh (2013) points out that learners of second or foreign languages recognize the importance of words in their learning. Participants noted that English proficiency provides jobs that require bilingual skills. Besides, this opportunity is aligned with the other categories of learning more about cultures and travel opportunities by underscoring the need for vocabulary tailored to the professional context and creating a bridge between cultures since English is a globalized language.

From the participants' point of view, learning vocabulary is also seen as an opportunity to improve their comprehension and communicative skills. Learning sufficient words to build a language learner's mental lexicon is a critical aspect, especially while learning a second language (Chiew & Ismail, 2021). In the comprehension part, participants interpret the language in a real-world context. In addition, it was noted that communication is key for participants, and this can be done by practicing new words to make their communication more precise and have a meaningful interaction.

Figure4

Participants' beliefs about vocabulary learning opportunities.



4.3 Incidental Vocabulary Learning

Figure 5 below shows situations where participants of different ethnicities learned vocabulary incidentally. MP1 shared that she learned English vocabulary through podcasts, books, and Instagram. In addition, IP1 and AP1 shared that they learned new vocabulary through movies and series, while IP1 and MOP2 learned it through listening to music.

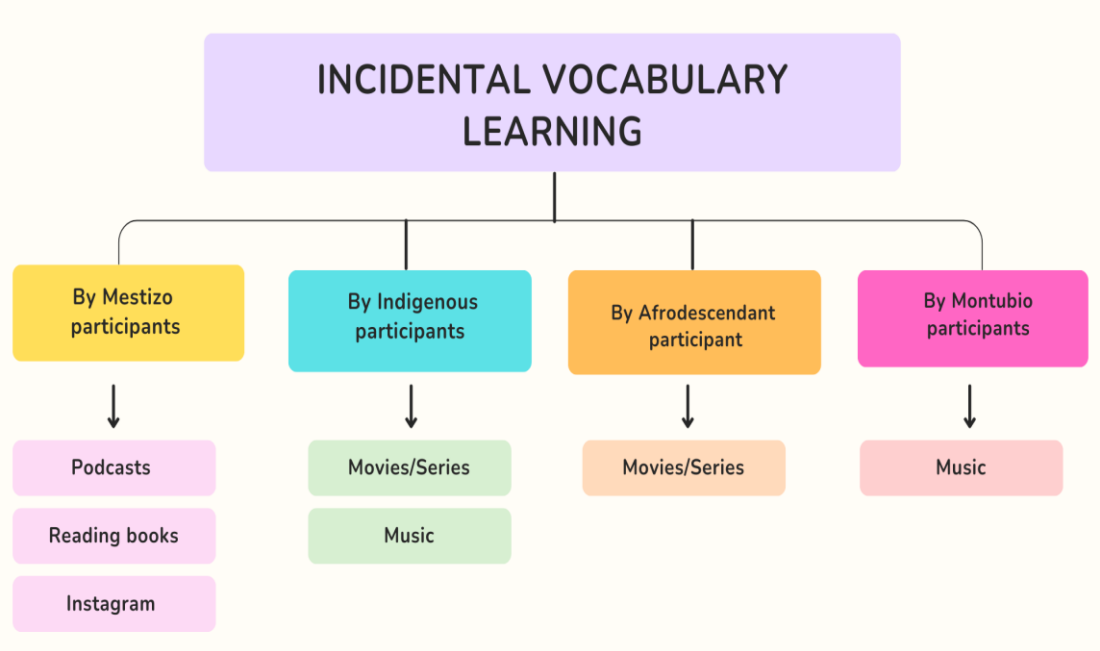
In this section, participants highlighted how they learn new vocabulary, which belongs to Incidental learning. Here, participants could learn more vocabulary without being conscious of their learning process. Therefore, AP1 mentioned that she realized that most of the time, she learned new words by watching movies since she was a child because she was attracted to the language: "[…] since I was a child, I always liked languages a lot, so I learned a lot, I realized that I learned a lot watching movies, series, I was very interested in the translation of the language itself". However, MOP2 shared that he did learn vocabulary only by listening to music: "[…] The truth is

that I learned vocabulary only with music. I looked up the lyrics and tried to translate it with what I understood".

Firstly, this discussion opens with Incidental learning applied by participants. Students need exposure to input; through that exposure, they are likely to make small gains in knowledge Teng (2023). In this case, participants shared a list of different mediums they use to learn vocabulary. This list begins with podcasts to reinforce listening skills where the participant is exposed to authentic language, making it a helpful tool for natural learning. Movies expose participants to a contextualized environment where they use idiomatic expressions and pronunciation, aiding comprehension and retention. Similar to movies, listening to music enhances memory retention through repetition. Incidental vocabulary acquisition can occur both explicitly and implicitly; however, when incidental vocabulary acquisition occurs through an explicit cognitive learning process, such as direct attention to vocabulary items and a conscious effort to learn, the effect becomes greater (Lee, 2023). The use of social media is also related to incidental learning, as it can be seen that one participant made use of Instagram as an informal exposure to the language, where she looked for meaningful phrases. At the same time, when reading books, participants highlight phrases or unknown words, promoting vocabulary development.

Figure 5

Participants' incidental vocabulary learning



4.4 Explicit Vocabulary Learning

As is represented in Figure 6 below, participants shared their conscious process of learning, where they mentioned some tools that help them learn vocabulary. In the category of learning in class MP2 and AP1, for them learning vocabulary in class, they can ask for the teacher's help and then reinforce the use of the word to learn it. Continuing with the category of learning on the Internet, IP2, AP1, and MOP2 mentioned that they use some tools such as websites, apps, or YouTube to learn a new word. They look for definitions or meanings on the Internet to know how words work. Moreover, MOP2 said he uses a vocabulary book where he learns vocabulary from a specific book focused solely on vocabulary. For the Dictionary section, MOP1, MOP2, and IP2 said they use the dictionary to consult different vocabulary words.

As a result of the interview, different learning tools or methods used by the participants to learn vocabulary were identified. One of them was looking for help or explanations directly from the teacher. MP2 said:

> I come and ask my teachers. Teacher, I found this word, and the truth is that I don't understand what it literally means in Spanish [...] So, yes, basically, I ask a professional, an expert, about this so I can get rid of my doubts.

Most participants agreed that the Internet is a good source of information. MOP1 stated: "Well, I learn a lot from videos on the internet to research how they say how they are used and online dictionaries and stuff." MOP1 also said that YouTube is his tool for learning vocabulary in terms of usage and pronunciation: "Well, I learn enough from videos on the internet to research how to say how they are used." Furthermore, IP1 reported how apps, specifically those focused on reading, help him learn vocabulary: "I use a reading application that even helps me to highlight words that sometimes are not understood, and it adds a dictionary in the same application." MOP2 also mentioned that he uses a unique book to learn vocabulary: "For the moment, I am relying only on one book, which contains vocabulary." For instance, the use of the dictionary is beneficial for understanding new words, as stated by IP2:

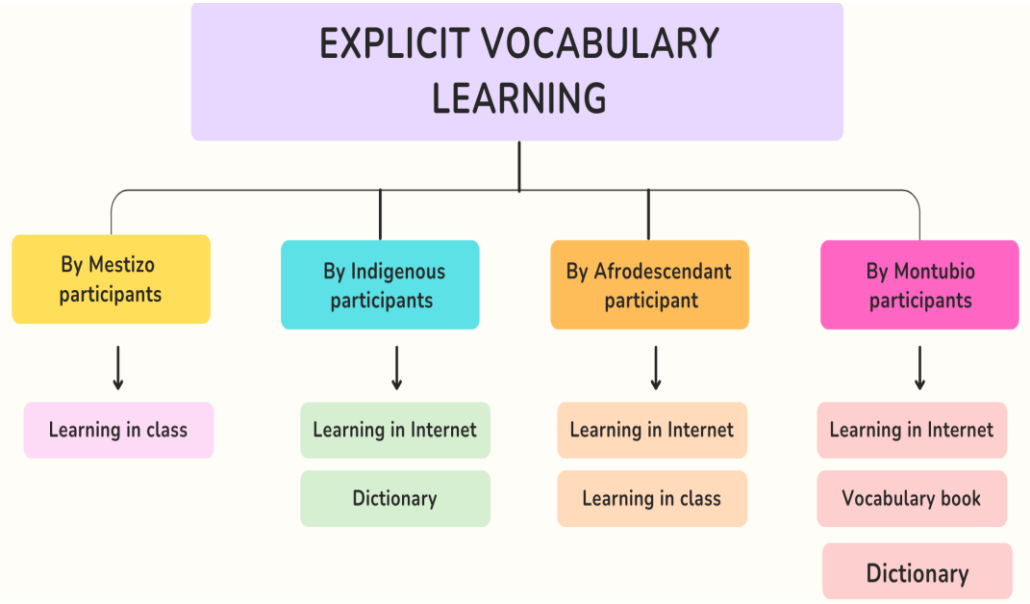
> When I find a new word, literally what I do the most is go to a dictionary because that has been one of the most important tools for me because there are words that one does not find logical, one does not understand what it means, so I always go to the dictionary, to the Cambridge dictionary that we have, so I always go there because it is a reliable page.

Continuing with explicit learning, participants emphasized learning through the Internet and classes.

The learner may look for regularities in the linguistic input in order to identify systematic patterns, rules, or concepts that capture these regularities (Roehr-Brackin, 2022). Most participants shared that the learning tools, such as YouTube, online dictionaries, apps, etc., are mostly technology-based. Lexical tools include open-line resources like Google, Wikipedia, e-dictionaries, and lexical concordances (Iravi & Malmir, 2023). In order to understand the different uses of vocabulary, participants look for the meanings through the internet, where they have instant access to information by using diverse sources, making it an essential tool for direct learning. On the other hand, when participants still have doubts about using a word, or it does not have a literal translation into their L1, they look out for professional help in the classroom. Besides, participants emphasized the importance of classroom learning, allowing teacher guidance and clarification, and practicing creating an environment that provides immediate reinforcement.

Figure 6

Participants' explicit vocabulary learning



4.5 Participants' adaptations to vocabulary learning strategies

According to Figure 7 below, seven sub-categories emerged from the interviews. Here, the participants reported the adaptations they have made to the strategies to learn vocabulary of the target language. Therefore, MP2 said she has added more vocabulary word research other than simply doing translations. In addition, MP1 stated that she went from spending long hours learning and understanding vocabulary to minimizing that time considerably, as she now finds it easier to learn vocabulary. In contrast, IP1 shared that he had left the focus on grammar to apply the vocabulary daily in real-life situations; likewise, IP2 said to have adapted his study style, meaning he adapted his vocabulary learning into his daily life learning. Moreover, AP1 is said to have added more learning hours, which involves more hours learning vocabulary in university compared to high school, as now she is studying an English major. Lastly, MOP2 stated to have left the habit of learning vocabulary when listening to music to directly focus on learning vocabulary first from either books or other tools; MOP1 also stopped using the vocabulary notebooks and simply read and applied the new words.

During the interview, participants shared the learning vocabulary adaptations they had done to fit their needs. In that regard, MP2 indicated that she has changed from doing translation to delving into more deep research of words, as stated:

> In the beginning, I didn't do so much research about the words, so I think that has been a change, an adaptation during the process of learning English, because it was just, ok, I translated it from English, from Spanish, and that's it, that's the vocabulary. But now it's more like, ok, that word can have many more meanings, so it requires a lot of research.

Similarly, AP1 highlighted the change from a few hours of learning English in school to using the target language every day at college:

> […] Before, in school, we didn't have many hours of English. But, well, since I'm already studying for a career that involves English, I mean, the main subject is English, we have more hours of English, obviously. Every day, we speak English, and we have more vocabulary and more techniques. So, in school, I hardly went over vocabulary.

Also, IP1 mentioned how he changes his strategies depending on the context of learning and also the switch from focusing just on grammar to real applications and practices:

> Well, my vocabulary strategies have changed depending on where I went to learn English. For example, in school, I clearly learned in a little bit scarce way due to the little importance I gave to learning in English. Then, it changed more when I entered the university, and I was adapting more to the practice, the use, and also the daily life. [...] I started to read in English as a learning method, and also, let's say, I changed that style of just learning grammar and started to put it into practice in everyday life to make better decisions.

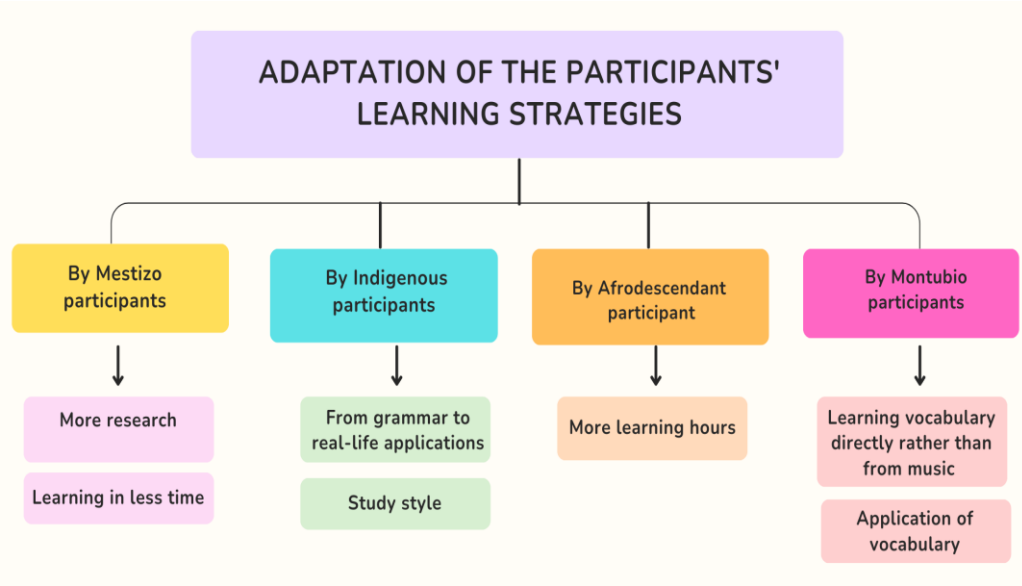
The participants shared how they changed or adapted their learning in this section. Most of them did it regarding strategies, study hours, and even the contexts they were learning. This event goes hand in hand with Harmer's belief (2002), as cited in Burgos and Castro (2023, p.10) when he said that vocabulary would constantly change and evolve; it will depend on the setting, on new and emerging knowledge, on cultural practices, on circumstances and, of course, on people's need to communicate. Therefore, learners will always change or adapt their strategies for learning vocabulary as new information and exposure to different environments in which they have to meet or use vocabulary arise.

In addition, as noted above, participants have adapted their strategies, which are now different from those they used at school or before university because they have changed the place

where they study. Specifically, this is because they are now studying for an English-focused degree, meaning they give their full attention to English. In this sense, Ameri's point of view is observed here, as she mentions that each culture provides 'intellectual adaptation tools,' which allow people to use their skills in a way that suits the culture they live in. Thus, students, whether changing their environment geographically or educationally, are forced to adapt or change strategies for learning that are already useful in their current setting.

Figure 7

Learning adaptations made by the participants to learn English vocabulary.



4.6 Strategies for Overcoming Vocabulary Learning Challenges

According to Figure 8 below, seven categories arose from the interviews. Here, the participants share the strategies they use to overcome the challenges they have faced while learning English vocabulary. Accordingly, for the category of asking teachers for help, AP1, MP2, and MOP mentioned that when they had problems understanding vocabulary, they asked for help from

university professors or other teachers they knew. Conversely, MP2 shared that peer support in class when something is not clear helps them understand vocabulary easily. Also, MP1 mentioned that imitating untranslatable words was helpful in trying to give meaning to words that are not translatable to her L1 (first language).

In the case of IP1, he mentioned that looking at and remembering relevant words helped him when he struggled to learn vocabulary. Another strategy mentioned was that the actual practice of vocabulary has been beneficial to understanding when encountering new words. Similarly, MOP1 expressed that it is important to understand all the vocabulary words deeply to overcome any vocabulary-related challenge. Also, IP1 said that they should look for other ways of learning or, in cases of speeches or conversations, look for similar or alternative words when the target word is forgotten. Lastly, MOP2 shared that self-reflection has helped him realize what and where the flaws are when learning vocabulary in English in order to improve over time.

From the interview, participants shared different strategies for overcoming challenges when learning English vocabulary. In that sense, MP2 said that when she does not understand differentiated words, she asks for help from her teachers:

> I ask my teachers. “Teacher, I found this word, and I really don't understand what it means literally in Spanish” because, well, teachers usually say not to try to translate, but I really feel that it is an important factor to contextualize our language with the other language. The understanding is going to be more effective. So, yes, basically, ask a professional or an expert about this, and then I can get rid of the doubt.

On the other hand, MOP1 said that a deep understanding of words has helped him when struggling with vocabulary learning:

> I like to try to fully understand the meaning of the word. I think that if you don't understand what a word is, it can be applied in different contexts, and its meaning can change. And if you still don't completely understand what the word means, then you will never remember it or apply it.

Furthermore, IP1 shared his ongoing process to overcome challenges when learning vocabulary and mentioned how important it is for him to remember words according to their relevance in use:

> I have not overcome them per se, but I have been able to improve in terms of the difficulty they may bring. Again, the most significant tool that has helped me with this has been being able to remember them based on their relevance.

Overall, in this category, the participants shared the strategies they employed to overcome the challenges they faced in learning vocabulary. These included seeking help from their university teacher or other teachers, peer support in the classroom, a deep understanding of words, self-reflection, imitation, and finding other ways to learn.

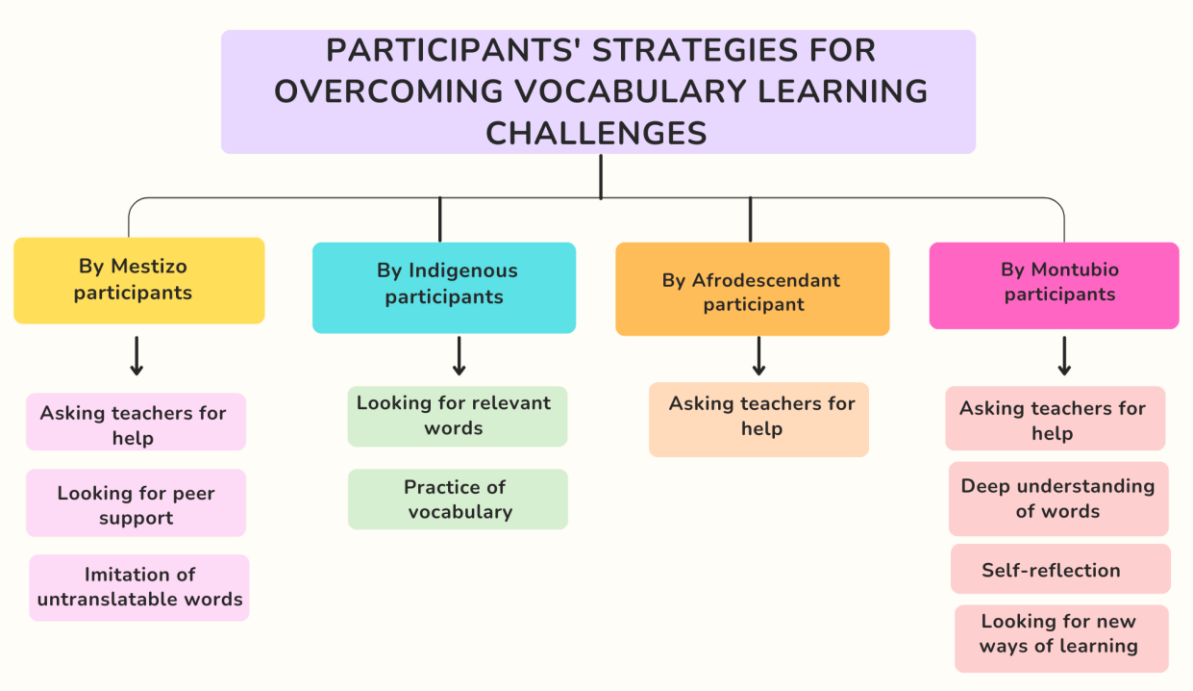
In the case of the most employed strategy, which is asking for help from professionals, specifically their teachers, Sarmiento et al. (2022) mention that, in fact, teachers help students to make connections between what they have learned and what they are currently learning. This is achieved by using the scaffolding approach, which has proven to be effective in supporting students in their learning process. That would explain why students look for help from their teacher when they have doubts or are struggling.

Finally, in general, participants show the need to understand vocabulary words in different ways despite encountering different obstacles in the process in order to be able to understand and

produce texts or conversations. In fact, according to Afzal's opinion., (2019) when he says that vocabulary is the foundation for speaking, listening, reading, and writing since, without vocabulary, linguistic competence is far from being achieved.

Figure 8

Participants' strategies for overcoming English vocabulary learning challenges



4.7 Strategies to Learn Vocabulary in English

As displayed in Figure 9 below, eight sub-categories arose from the interviews. Here, the participants share the strategies they use to learn English vocabulary. For the category of vocabulary application, MOP1, MOP2, AP1, and MP2 shared that they apply the vocabulary in class, with peers, speaking new words in different contexts, writing them in sentences, and, in general, using the vocabulary daily. On the other hand, for IP2, MOP1, and MP1, note-taking

involved taking notes of new vocabulary in the English notebook, notebooks only for vocabulary, phone, and list of vocabulary words.

In the category of contextualization, IP2, MOP1, and MP1 find contextualization useful for applying vocabulary in different contexts, deducing the meaning of vocabulary by reading the context of texts, and comparing the use of the same vocabulary in different contexts. Likewise, MP2 and IP1 also use memorization of vocabulary words and their different meanings. In contrast, the category of deducing meanings entails MOP1, MOP2, and MP1. They used that strategy to understand specific vocabulary and then to check later if they were, in fact, correct. Another strategy AP1, MP1, and IP2 mentioned was the use of visuals to make connections between vocabulary and pictures or objects and to have vocabulary words to look at daily in sticky notes pasted on walls, etc. Alternatively, MOP1, MOP, and MP2 declare that they look for definitions according to the word in question and its context or when some words do not have a specified literal meaning. The last strategy mentioned by IP2 was repetition; for him, repetition works very well. It includes repetition by writing solely words, using them in sentences, and pronouncing or speaking them often.

In this section, participants shared their strategies for learning vocabulary and how they have worked for them. For example, AP1 mentioned that she learned vocabulary more effectively when applying and speaking the vocabulary itself in different contexts:

> Something that has helped me a lot is speaking it, not just learning a new word and that's it, but trying to use it in various ways and in various contexts. So that has helped me to retain it for a long time and so that I will never forget it either.

Now, regarding the categories of note-taking and repetition, IP2 mentioned how taking notes and repeating the vocabulary help him learn better: “I write down the word, and then I do the same routine, the repetition so that it remains engraved in my mind and so that I cannot forget, and then I would already know the word I am learning.”

Also, the category of contextualization had similar opinions among participants on how this strategy supports them in getting the meaning of words that have various meanings. For instance, MP2 stressed the importance of not only translating but also contextualizing the words:

> I cannot only translate [...] because I can translate a word, but only the word can give me one thing. If I put it in another context, it can mean something very different. That is why it is important not to focus only on translating into Spanish; it can be a very different context, and, in that case, there can be mistakes.

On the other hand, for the category of deducing meanings, in the case of unknown words, MOP1 mentioned: “First I try to see if I can understand what it means. Maybe then I see if what I thought it matched the definition. I try to know what it means”.

For the category of visuals, when it comes to learning new vocabulary, AP1 noted the following:

> I try to relate the vocabulary to certain things; for example, if I don't know some new word I learn, I try to relate it to another one, not with another one, but with some object or things we see so that the word sticks in my mind.

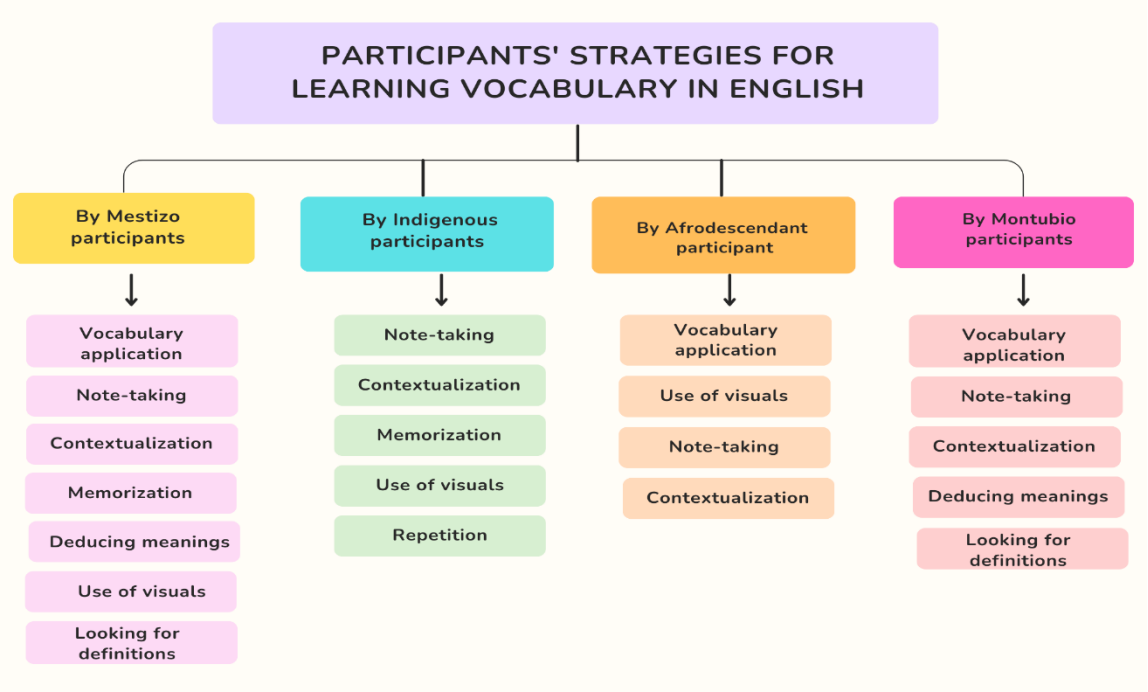
In this section, the participants shared their strategies for learning English vocabulary. There was a good variety of them, from vocabulary application to repetition, either in written or spoken forms. It was evident that most of them had a logical order to learn, from deducing the

meaning, looking for its definition directly, making connections with visuals or objects, etc. Besides, it is important to highlight that most of them recognized the importance of considering the context in which different vocabulary words can be used. This aligns with the experiences shared by Lestari and Wahyudin (2020), where EFL students at the undergraduate level also reported using five types of language learning strategies which metacognitive strategies are the most used by the students, then social strategies, compensatory strategies, cognitive strategies, memory strategies, and finally, the effective strategy. Also, Heubener's view (1965), as cited in Rohmatillah (2017), aligns with the strategies employed by the participants as he believes that learning vocabulary involves developing habits, which means associating symbols with their meanings because once the meaning is perfectly known, it is as effective as constant repetition of the vocabulary (p.72). It implies using those strategies regularly, thus becoming part of a habit as they use them in their daily learning process.

On the other hand, to learn vocabulary, the participants make connections to internalize the information in their own way while using the strategies that fit their needs. This aligns with the view of Vygotsky (1962), as cited in Doolittle (1996), that declares that students learn different words that have specific definitions and, once the connection between the word and its concept has been established, the student will be able to use the learned words with ease. In this regard, participants expressed the need to understand the words while making connections in their own way to understand and use the vocabulary accurately while considering the different applicable contexts.

Figure 9

Participants' strategies for learning vocabulary in English



5. Conclusion

This exploratory study aimed to determine how different Ecuadorian ethnic groups learn vocabulary in English as a foreign language and identify the challenges and opportunities involved in this process. Regarding challenges, the participants struggled with recalling vocabulary words, words that do not have a translation in their mother tongue, words with similar sounds but different meanings. Meanwhile, participants expressed that learning vocabulary helps them communicate effectively in various settings, travel, and have more job opportunities.

In order to overcome the vocabulary learning challenges, the participants sought help from their teachers and peers. They employed different learning strategies, such as self-reflection and a deep understanding of words. It was also revealed that the tools used to learn vocabulary are mostly

technology-based, including online dictionaries, apps, websites, YouTube, and just one physical vocabulary book.

On the other hand, participants noted they learned vocabulary incidentally and explicitly. In incidental learning, students mentioned learning vocabulary from books, apps, movies, music, and podcasts. However, some students preferred explicit learning and purposely used the Internet to learn vocabulary. Others learned in class by asking their teachers the meaning and contexts where specific vocabulary words can be used.

Finally, the strategies employed by participants to learn English vocabulary are primarily cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Within the cognitive strategies, participants mentioned feeling more comfortable connecting the vocabulary with familiar contexts, visuals, and objects. Besides, participants shared that they use it in written and spoken forms to retain their vocabulary for a long time. Also, regarding metacognitive strategies, it is important to highlight that the participants agreed on the importance of contextualization and adjusting the understanding of vocabulary accordingly, as words have different meanings depending on the context. Moreover, participants mentioned that their vocabulary learning strategies have evolved. They now prefer to spend more time researching the meanings of words, dedicating additional hours to learning, and focusing on the practical application of vocabulary in real-life contexts.

6. Implications and Limitations

This study provided different insights into how students from different ethnic groups learn vocabulary in English. However, some aspects did not allow this study to gain a broader generalization, as the number of participants was small (seven). Also, more ethnic groups could

not participate as there was not a wide variety of them in the PINE major. Finally, it is important to mention that given its nature and limitations, this study could not prove causation between the participants who used strategies and their ethnicities. This warrants more studies to be conducted on this topic.

7. Recommendations

According to the data collected, further studies should include more extensive and more diverse participants considering various cultural factors of the students along with a focus not solely on vocabulary learning. Additionally, more instruments can be used to gather data so the triangulation process can be carried out. Therefore, this study could have a broader scope in English learning. Finally, teachers can promote and use different and varied strategies to teach vocabulary, ensuring alignment with students' strategies while fostering autonomous learning tailored to their preferred learning styles. For instance, teachers can implement vocabulary word maps to help students visually connect new vocabulary with definitions, synonyms, antonyms, and examples. Vocabulary journals can encourage students to record words, definitions, and example sentences independently. Additionally, role-playing scenarios will help students practice vocabulary in important real-life contexts. These strategies support diverse learning preferences and empower learners to take responsibility for their vocabulary learning process.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Validation of the instrument

Validation of the Instrument by Experts.

Evaluator´s name: Martha Lucía Lara Freire

Specialty: Linguistic in English Learning

Academic degree: Master

- **Authors of the Final Integrated Project:**

  Erika Salomé Rea Barrera

  Miguel Andrés Paida Gonzáles

- **Title of the research:**

  Investigating How do Montubio, Afro-Ecuadorian, Indigenous, and Mestizo students approach vocabulary learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom

- **General objective:**

  To analyze the English vocabulary learning experiences of EFL students of diverse ethnic groups through interviews.

- **Specific objectives:**

- To identify the challenges and opportunities encountered by EFL students of diverse ethnic groups in learning English vocabulary.
- To recognize the strategies implemented by EFL students of diverse ethnic groups to improve their English vocabulary learning.
- To reflect on the learning strategies applied by EFL students of different ethnic groups when learning vocabulary in English.

1. INSTRUMENT TO VALIDATE THE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Instruction: Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement on the statements provided and circle the number which corresponds to your best to your judgment.

1 – Strongly Disagree **2** – Disagree **3** – Undecided **4** – Agree **5** – Strongly Agree

Each part of the instrument is relevant to answer the objectives of the study.	1	2	3	4	5
The content of the instrument can effectively and in-depth measure the element of the study being evaluated	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument has an appropriate sample of content for the construct being measured.	1	2	3	4	5
The content and its alternatives are not restricted or confined in scope.	1	2	3	4	5
The items in the instrument are stated clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
The items on the instrument can elicit responses which are stable, definite, consistent and not conflicting.	1	2	3	4	5
The layout or format of the instrument is technically sound.	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument is not too short or long enough that the participants will be able to answer it within a given time.	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument is interesting such that participants will be induced to respond to it and accomplish it fully.	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument as a whole could answer the basic purpose for which it is designed.	1	2	3	4	5

2. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS SECTION

1. Do you consider that the proposed items correspond to categories, unit of analysis or variables of the study?

   Yes___**X**____ NO_____

2. What items would you add or erase?

   All the items are necessary to fulfill the instrument purpose.

3. What other suggestions would you make to improve this instrument?

   It is recommended to previously interact with the interviewees to stablish rapport and have a clearer idea of their background.

Evaluator's Names: **Martha Lucía Lara Freire**

ID: **0603143405**

Academic Degree: **Master**

Signature: _____ Firmado electrónicamente por: MARTHA LUCIA LARA FREIRE

Semi structured interview

Introducción: (Introduction)

'First of all, we would like to thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your collaboration is undoubtedly of the utmost importance and will be a key element in the development of our degree project'

"Ante todo, quisiera expresarle nuestro más profundo agradecimiento por haberse tomado el tiempo para participar en esta entrevista. Su colaboración es, sin duda, de suma relevancia y será una pieza clave en el desarrollo de nuestro proyecto de titulación."

Indicaciones: (Indications)

Su información es completamente anónima.

Your information is completely anonymous.

Su información no será compartida con terceros sin su consentimiento.

Your information will not be shared with third parties without your consent.

El uso de su información es completamente para fines académicos.

The use of your information is entirely for academic purposes.

Trate de responder las preguntas en base a su experiencia, no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

Please try to answer the questions based on your experience. There are no right or wrong answers.

Objetivo: (Objective:)

El objetivo principal de esta entrevista es comprender los métodos y estrategias que utilizas para aprender y retener vocabulario en inglés. Esto incluye explorar las técnicas que encuentran más efectivas, los recursos que utilizan, las dificultades que enfrentan y las prácticas usadas para resolver los mismos.
The main aim of this interview is to understand the methods and strategies you use to learn and retain vocabulary in English. This includes exploring the techniques you find most effective, the resources you use, the difficulties you face and the practices used to resolve them.

Ice-Break Questions:

1. ¿Qué te motivó a estudiar inglés? *(What motivated you to study English)*

2.¿Cuántos idiomas hablas? *(How many languages do you speak?)*

Preguntas principales:

1. ¿Con qué etnia te identificas? *(What ethnicity do you identify with?)*
2. Basándose en su experiencia ¿Cómo ve su grupo étnico la importancia de aprender inglés?
   Based on your experience, how does your ethnic group see the importance of learning English?
3. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedicas al estudio del vocabulario en inglés?
   How much time do you spend studying English vocabulary?
4. ¿Al estudiar vocabulario qué estrategias utilizas para aprender nuevas palabras en inglés?
   When studying vocabulary what strategies do you use to learn new words in English?
5. ¿Qué herramientas o recursos específicos utilizas para aprender vocabulario en inglés?
   What specific tools or resources do you use to learn English vocabulary?
6. ¿Qué haces cuando encuentras una palabra desconocida en inglés cuando realizas actividades de ocio? Por ejemplo, cuando estas escuchando música, viendo series o películas en inglés.
   What do you do when you encounter an unfamiliar English word during leisure activities? For example, when you are listening to music, watching series or films in English.
7. ¿Qué estrategia consideras ha sido la más efectiva para ti para retener el vocabulario aprendido a largo plazo?

   What strategy do you think has been the most effective for you in retaining the vocabulary you have learnt in the long term?

8. ¿Cuáles son los mayores retos a los que te has enfrentado a la hora de aprender vocabulario en inglés?
   What are the biggest challenges you have faced in learning English vocabulary?

9. ¿Cómo has logrado superar los retos a los que te has enfrentado en relación con el aprendizaje de vocabulario?
   How have you managed to overcome the challenges you have faced in relation to learning vocabulary?

10. ¿De qué manera crees que afecta tu lengua materna a tu proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés?
    In which way do you think your mother tongue affects your process of learning vocabulary in English?

11. Cuando encuentras una palabra en inglés que no se traduce o no tiene un significado literal a español, ¿Qué estrategia usas para aprender esa palabra?
    When you encounter a word in English that does not translate or does not have literal meaning in Spanish, what strategy do you use to learn that word?

12. ¿Qué estrategia usas cuando una palabra en inglés tiene varios significados?
    What strategy do you use when a word in English has several meanings?

13. ¿Cómo has adaptado o cambiado tus técnicas de estudio del vocabulario en inglés para adaptarlas a tus necesidades?
    How have you adapted or changed your English vocabulary study techniques to suit your needs?

Despedida: Farewell:

"Le expresamos nuestro más sincero agradecimiento por habernos brindado su tiempo el día de hoy y por compartir sus valiosas experiencias y conocimientos sobre su proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés. Estamos convencidos de que su contribución ha sido de gran valor para este estudio."
'We express our sincere thanks to you for giving us your time today and for sharing your valuable experiences and insights into your English vocabulary learning process. We are convinced that your contribution has been of great value to this study.

Validation of the Instrument by Experts.

Evaluator´s name: Mahly j. Martinez

Specialty: English Language Teacher

Academic degree: Phd. in Education

- **Authors of the Final Integrated Project:**

  Erika Salomé Rea Barrera

  Miguel Andrés Paida Gonzáles

- **Title of the research:**

  Investigating How do Montubio, Afro-Ecuadorian, Indigenous, and Mestizo preservice teachers approach vocabulary learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom

- **General objective:**

  To analyze the English language learning experiences of preservice teachers through interviews and focus groups.

- **Specific objectives:**

1. Identify the challenges encountered by pre-service teachers in learning English vocabulary.
2. Recognize the strategies implemented by pre-service teachers to improve their English vocabulary learning process.
3. Generate a space for discussion for pre-service teachers to identify incidental and explicit learning.

1. INSTRUMENT TO VALIDATE THE RATING SCALE

Instruction: Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement on the statements provided below by encircling the number which corresponds to your best to your judgment.

1 – Strongly Disagree **2** – Disagree **3** – Undecided **4** – Agree
5 – Strongly Agree

Each part of the instrument is relevant to answer the objectives of the study.	1	2	3	4	5
The content of the instrument can effectively and in-depth measure the element of the study being evaluated (literal Reading comprehension).	1	2	3	4	5
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The content and its alternatives are not restricted or confined in scope.	1	2	3	4	5
The items in the instrument are stated clearly.	1	2	3	4	5
The items on the instrument can elicit responses which are stable, definite, consistent and not conflicting.	1	2	3	4	5
The terms adapted in the scale are culturally appropriate.	1	2	3	4	5
The layout or format of the instrument is technically sound.	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument is not too short or long enough that the participants will be able to answer it within a given time.	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument is interesting such that participants will be induced to respond to it and accomplish it fully.	1	2	3	4	5
The instrument as a whole could answer the basic purpose for which it is designed.	1	2	3	4	5

2. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS SECTION

1. Do you consider that the proposed items correspond to categories, unit of analysis or variables of the study?

   Yes X NO_____

2. What items would you add or erase?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. **What other suggestions would you make to improve this instrument?**

   Check Item 9 and 12. Convert them to Information question.

Evaluator's Names: Mahly j. Martinez

ID: 1759432733

Academic Degree: Phd in Education.

Firmado electrónicamente por:
MAHLY JAHZEEL
MARTINEZ JIMENEZ

Signature: _____

Semi structured interview

Introducción: (Introduction)

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   Based on your experience, how does your ethnic group see the importance of learning English?
3. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedicas al estudio del vocabulario en inglés?
   How much time do you spend studying English vocabulary?
4. ¿Al estudiar vocabulario qué estrategias utilizas para aprender nuevas palabras en inglés?
   When studying vocabulary what strategies do you use to learn new words in English?
5. ¿Qué herramientas o recursos específicos utilizas para aprender vocabulario en inglés?
   What specific tools or resources do you use to learn English vocabulary?
6. ¿Qué haces cuando encuentras una palabra desconocida en inglés cuando realizas actividades de ocio? Por ejemplo, cuando estas escuchando música, viendo series o películas en inglés.
   What do you do when you encounter an unfamiliar English word during leisure activities? For example, when you are listening to music, watching series or films in English.
7. ¿Qué estrategia consideras ha sido la más efectiva para ti para retener el vocabulario aprendido a largo plazo?

   What strategy do you think has been the most effective for you in retaining the vocabulary you have learnt in the long term?

8. ¿Cuáles son los mayores retos a los que te has enfrentado a la hora de aprender vocabulario en inglés?
   What are the biggest challenges you have faced in learning English vocabulary?

9. ¿Cómo has logrado superar los retos a los que te has enfrentado en relación con el aprendizaje de vocabulario?
   How have you managed to overcome the challenges you have faced in relation to learning vocabulary?

10. ¿De qué manera crees que afecta tu lengua materna a tu proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés?
    In which way do you think your mother tongue affects your process of learning vocabulary in English?

11. Cuando encuentras una palabra en inglés que no se traduce o no tiene un significado literal a español, ¿Qué estrategia usas para aprender esa palabra?
    When you encounter a word in English that does not translate or does not have literal meaning in Spanish, what strategy do you use to learn that word?

12. ¿Qué estrategia usas cuando una palabra en inglés tiene varios significados?
    What strategy do you use when a word in English has several meanings?

13. ¿Cómo has adaptado o cambiado tus técnicas de estudio del vocabulario en inglés para adaptarlas a tus necesidades?
    How have you adapted or changed your English vocabulary study techniques to suit your needs?

Despedida: Farewell:

"Le expresamos nuestro más sincero agradecimiento por habernos brindado su tiempo el día de hoy y por compartir sus valiosas experiencias y conocimientos sobre su proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés. Estamos convencidos de que su contribución ha sido de gran valor para este estudio."
'We express our sincere thanks to you for giving us your time today and for sharing your valuable experiences and insights into your English vocabulary learning process. We are convinced that your contribution has been of great value to this study.

Validation of the Instrument by Experts.

Evaluator´s name: Diego P. Ortega Auquilla

Specialty: Language Curriculum Development and Foreign Language Didactics

Academic degree: Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction, with emphasis in TESL/TEFL and Ph.D. candidate in Education.

- **Authors of the Final Integrated Project:**

  Erika Salomé Rea Barrera

  Miguel Andrés Paida Gonzáles

- **Title of the research:**

  Investigating How do Montubio, Afro-Ecuadorian, Indigenous, and Mestizo preservice teachers approach vocabulary learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom

- **General objective:**

  To analyze the English language learning experiences of preservice teachers through interviews and focus groups.

Comentado [DO1]: What kinds of experiences specifically? – this is way too broad!!

- **Specific objectives:**

1. Identify the challenges encountered by pre-service teachers in learning English vocabulary.
2. Recognize the strategies implemented by pre-service teachers to improve their English vocabulary learning process.

Comentado [DO2]: I will get rid of process!

3. Generate a space for discussion for pre-service teachers to identify incidental and explicit learning.

Comentado [DO3]: This seems to be an activity – not a specific objective! This activity could help you achieve your third specific objective, though!

1. INSTRUMENT TO VALIDATE THE RATING SCALE

Comentado [DO4]: This procedure should not be used to revise an interview protocol or interview guide, as this is NOT an instrument of quantitative data collection. This is very weird, vague and confusing.

Instruction: Please indicate your degree of agreement or disagreement on the statements provided below by encircling the number which corresponds to your best to your judgment.

1 – Strongly Disagree **2** – Disagree **3** – Undecided **4** – Agree **5** – Strongly Agree

Each part of the instrument is relevant to answer the objectives of the study.	1	2	3X	4	5
The content of the instrument can effectively and in-depth measure the element of the study being evaluated (literal Reading comprehension).	1	2	3X	4	5
The instrument has an appropriate sample of content for the construct being measured.	1	2	3	4X	5
The content and its alternatives are not restricted or confined in scope.	1	2	3	4X	5
The items in the instrument are stated clearly.	1	2	3	4	5X
The items on the instrument can elicit responses which are stable, definite, consistent and not conflicting.	1	2	3	4X	5
The terms adapted in the scale are culturally appropriate.	1	2	3X	4	5
The layout or format of the instrument is technically sound.	1	2	3	4X	5
The instrument is not too short or long enough that the participants will be able to answer it within a given time.	1	2	3	4	5X
The instrument is interesting such that participants will be induced to respond to it and accomplish it fully.	1	2	3	4X	5
The instrument as a whole could answer the basic purpose for which it is designed.	1	2	3	4X	5

Comentado [DO5]: Why is this here – this has nothing to do with your research project?

2. COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS SECTION

1. Do you consider that the proposed items correspond to categories, unit of analysis or variables of the study?

   Yes_____ NO_____

2. What items would you add or erase?

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

Comentado [DO6]: These questions do NOT apply for your interview protocol – these may be suitable for a structured questionnaire to collect quantitative data.

3. **What other suggestions would you make to improve this instrument?**

You can see my comments and detailed feedback below within the comment boxes.

Evaluator's Names: Diego P. Ortega Auquilla

ID: 0105289821

Academic Degree: Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction, with emphasis in TESL/TEFL, and Ph.D. candidate in Education.

Signature: DIEGO PATRICIO ORTEGA AUQUILLA

Semi structured interview

Introduction:

'First of all, I would like to thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your collaboration is undoubtedly of the utmost importance and will be a key element in the development of our degree project' *("Ante todo, quisiera expresarle nuestro más profundo agradecimiento por haberse tomado el tiempo para participar en esta entrevista. Su colaboración es, sin duda, de suma relevancia y será una pieza clave en el desarrollo de nuestro proyecto de titulación.")*

Indicaciones: (Indications:)

Su información es completamente anónima. *(Your information is completely anonymous.)*

Su información no será compartida con terceros sin su consentimiento. *(Your information will not be shared with third parties without your consent.)*

El uso de su información es completamente para fines académicos. *(The use of your information is entirely for academic purposes.)*

Trate de responder las preguntas en base a su experiencia, no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas. *(Please try to answer the questions based on your experience. There are no right or wrong answers.)*

Objetivo: (Objective:)

El objetivo principal de esta entrevista es comprender los métodos y estrategias que utilizas para aprender y retener vocabulario en inglés. Esto incluye explorar las técnicas que encuentran más efectivas, los recursos que utilizan, las dificultades que enfrentan y las prácticas usadas para resolver los mismos. *(The main aim of this interview is to understand the methods and strategies you use to learn and retain vocabulary in English. This includes exploring the techniques you find most effective, the resources you use, the difficulties you face and the practices used to resolve them.)*

Comentado [DO7]: This is really good!

Ice-Break Questions:

1. ¿Dónde creciste? *(Where did you grow up?)*

2. ¿Sigue viviendo allí? *(Do you still live there?)*

3. ¿Por qué decidiste estudiar inglés? *(Why did you decide to study English?)*

4. ¿Con qué etnia te identificas? *(What ethnicity do you identify with?)*

5. ¿Cuántos idiomas hablas? *(How many languages do you speak?)*

6. ¿Cuántos años tienes? *(How old are you?)*

7. ¿En que semestre estás? *(What semester are you in?)*

Comentado [DO8]: The answers for most of these questions you can know them before the interview! You should not be asking these questions as ice-break questions because they are not those kinds of questions in nature.

Preguntas principales:

1. Basándose en su experiencia ¿Cómo ve su grupo étnico la importancia de aprender inglés? *(Based on your experience, how does your ethnic group see the importance of learning English?)*

Comentado [DO9]: Will you have pre-service teachers of English from different ethnic group as key informants during the interviews?

2. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedicas al estudio del vocabulario en inglés? *(How much time do you spend studying English vocabulary?)*

3. ¿Al estudiar vocabulario qué estrategias utilizas para aprender nuevas palabras en inglés? (Por ejemplo: Memorización, tarjetas, juegos, medios visuales, práctica) *(When studying vocabulary what strategies do you use to learn new words in English (e.g. memorisation, flashcards, games, visuals, practice)?)*

4. ¿Qué herramientas o recursos específicos (por ejemplo, apps, libros, flashcards) utilizas para aprender vocabulario en inglés? *(What specific tools or resources (e.g. apps, books, flashcards) do you use to learn English vocabulary?)*

Comentado [DO10]: These questions could be used for a questionnaire, so respondents can choose an answer among different options. But for an interview, you really need to come up with more open-ended questions; otherwise, the information you will receive will be too limited.

5. ¿Qué haces cuando encuentras una palabra desconocida en inglés cuando realizas actividades de ocio? Por ejemplo, cuando estas escuchando música, viendo series o películas en inglés. *(What do you do when you encounter an unfamiliar English word during leisure activities? For example, when you are listening to music, watching series or films in English.)*

6. ¿Qué estrategia consideras ha sido la más eficaz para ti para retener el vocabulario aprendido a largo plazo? *(What strategy do you think has been the most effective for you in retaining the vocabulary you have learnt in the long term?)*

7. ¿Cuáles son los mayores retos a los que te has enfrentado a la hora de aprender vocabulario en inglés? *(What are the biggest challenges you have faced in learning English vocabulary?)*

8. ¿Cómo has logrado superar los retos a los que te has enfrentado en relación con el aprendizaje de vocabulario? *(How have you managed to overcome the challenges you have faced in relation to learning vocabulary?)*

9. ¿Crees que afecta tu lengua materna a tu proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario? ¿Cómo? *(Do you think your mother tongue affects your vocabulary learning process? How?)*

Comentado [DO11]: This is a kind of yes/no question, so you will need to turn this into an open-ended question . . .

10. ¿Qué estrategia aplicas cuando te enfrentas a una palabra nueva en inglés que no se traduce a español literalmente? *(What strategy do you apply when faced with a new word in English that does not translate literally into Spanish?)*

11. ¿Qué estrategia usas cuando una palabra en inglés tiene varios significados? *(What strategy do you use when a word in English has several meanings?)*

12. ¿Has adaptado o cambiado tus técnicas de estudio del vocabulario en inglés para adaptarlas a tus necesidades? En caso afirmativo, ¿de qué manera? *(Have you adapted or changed your English vocabulary study techniques to suit your needs? If yes, in what way?)*

Comentado [DO12]: Same comment, as before. This is a kind of yes/no question, so you will need to turn this into an open-ended question . . .

Despedida: Farewell:

"Le expresamos nuestro más sincero agradecimiento por habernos brindado su tiempo el día de hoy y por compartir sus valiosas experiencias y conocimientos sobre su proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés. Estamos convencidos de que su contribución ha sido de gran valor para este estudio." *('We express our sincere thanks to you for giving us your time today and for sharing your valuable experiences and insights into your English vocabulary learning process. We are convinced that your contribution has been of great value to this study.)*

Appendix B

Semi-structured interview guide

Semi-structured interview guide: Exploring Strategies Employed to Learn Vocabulary by EFL Students from Specific Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups: An Exploratory Study

Introducción: (Introduction)

'First of all, we would like to thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. Your collaboration is undoubtedly of the utmost importance and will be a key element in the development of our degree project'

"Ante todo, quisiera expresarle nuestro más profundo agradecimiento por haberse tomado el tiempo para participar en esta entrevista. Su colaboración es, sin duda, de suma relevancia y será una pieza clave en el desarrollo de nuestro proyecto de titulación."

Indicaciones: (Indications)

Su información es completamente anónima.

Your information is completely anonymous.

Su información no será compartida con terceros sin su consentimiento.

Your information will not be shared with third parties without your consent.

El uso de su información es completamente para fines académicos.

The use of your information is entirely for academic purposes.

Trate de responder las preguntas en base a su experiencia, no existen respuestas correctas o incorrectas.

Please answer the questions based on your experience. There are no right or wrong answers.

Objetivo: (Objective:)

El objetivo principal de esta entrevista es comprender los métodos y estrategias que utilizas para aprender y retener vocabulario en inglés. Esto incluye explorar las técnicas que encuentran más efectivas, los recursos que utilizan, las dificultades que enfrentan y las prácticas usadas para resolver los mismos.

The main aim of this interview is to understand your methods and strategies for learning and retaining vocabulary in English. This includes exploring the techniques you find most effective, the resources you use, the difficulties you face, and the practices you use to resolve them.

Ice-Break Questions:

1. ¿Qué te motivó a estudiar inglés? *(What motivated you to study English)*

2.¿Cuántos idiomas hablas? *(How many languages do you speak?)*

Preguntas principales:

1. ¿Con qué etnia te identificas? *(What ethnicity do you identify with?)*

2. Basándose en su experiencia ¿Cómo ve su grupo étnico la importancia de aprender inglés?

Based on your experience, how does your ethnic group see the importance of learning English?

3. ¿Cuánto tiempo dedicas al estudio del vocabulario en inglés*?*

How much time do you spend studying English vocabulary?

4. ¿Al estudiar vocabulario qué estrategias utilizas para aprender nuevas palabras en inglés?

When studying vocabulary, what strategies do you use to learn new words in English?

5. ¿Qué herramientas o recursos específicos utilizas para aprender vocabulario en inglés?

What specific tools or resources do you use to learn English vocabulary?

6. ¿Qué haces cuando encuentras una palabra desconocida en inglés cuando realizas actividades de ocio? Por ejemplo, cuando estás escuchando música, viendo series o películas en inglés.

What do you do when encountering an unfamiliar English word during leisure activities? For example, when you are listening to music or watching a series or films in English,

7. ¿Qué estrategia consideras ha sido la más efectiva para ti para retener el vocabulario aprendido a largo plazo?

What strategy has been the most effective for you in retaining the vocabulary you have learned in the long term?

8. ¿Cuáles son los mayores retos a los que te has enfrentado a la hora de aprender vocabulario en inglés?

What are the biggest challenges you have faced in learning English vocabulary?

9. ¿Cómo has logrado superar los retos a los que te has enfrentado en relación con el aprendizaje de vocabulario?

How have you overcome the challenges you have faced concerning learning vocabulary?

10. ¿De qué manera crees que afecta tu lengua materna a tu proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés?

In which way do you think your mother tongue affects your process of learning English vocabulary?

11. Cuando encuentras una palabra en inglés que no se traduce o no tiene un significado literal a español, ¿Qué estrategia usas para aprender esa palabra?

When you encounter a word in English that does not translate or has no literal meaning in Spanish, what strategy do you use to learn that word?

12. ¿Qué estrategia usas cuando una palabra en inglés tiene varios significados?

What strategy do you use when a word in English has several meanings?

13. ¿Cómo has adaptado o cambiado tus técnicas de estudio del vocabulario en inglés para adaptarlas a tus necesidades?

How have you adapted or changed your English vocabulary study techniques to suit your needs?

Despedida: Farewell:

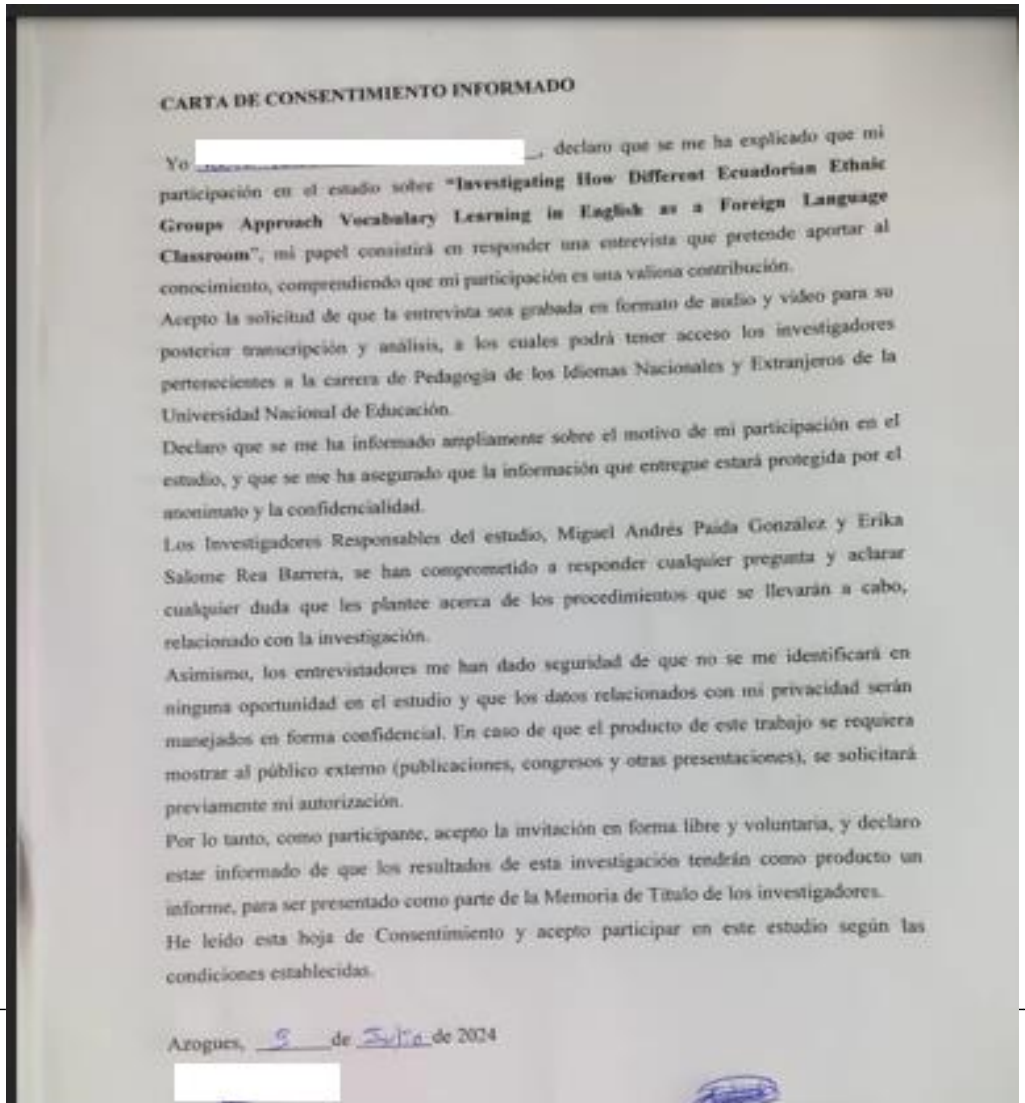
"Le expresamos nuestro más sincero agradecimiento por habernos brindado su tiempo el día de hoy y por compartir sus valiosas experiencias y conocimientos sobre su proceso de aprendizaje de vocabulario en inglés. Estamos convencidos de que su contribución ha sido de gran valor para este estudio."

'We sincerely thank you for giving us your time today and sharing your valuable experiences and insights into your English vocabulary learning process. We are convinced that your contribution has dramatically benefited this study.

Appendix C

Consent from the participants

Participant 1 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo [redacted], declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre **"Investigating How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom"**, mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

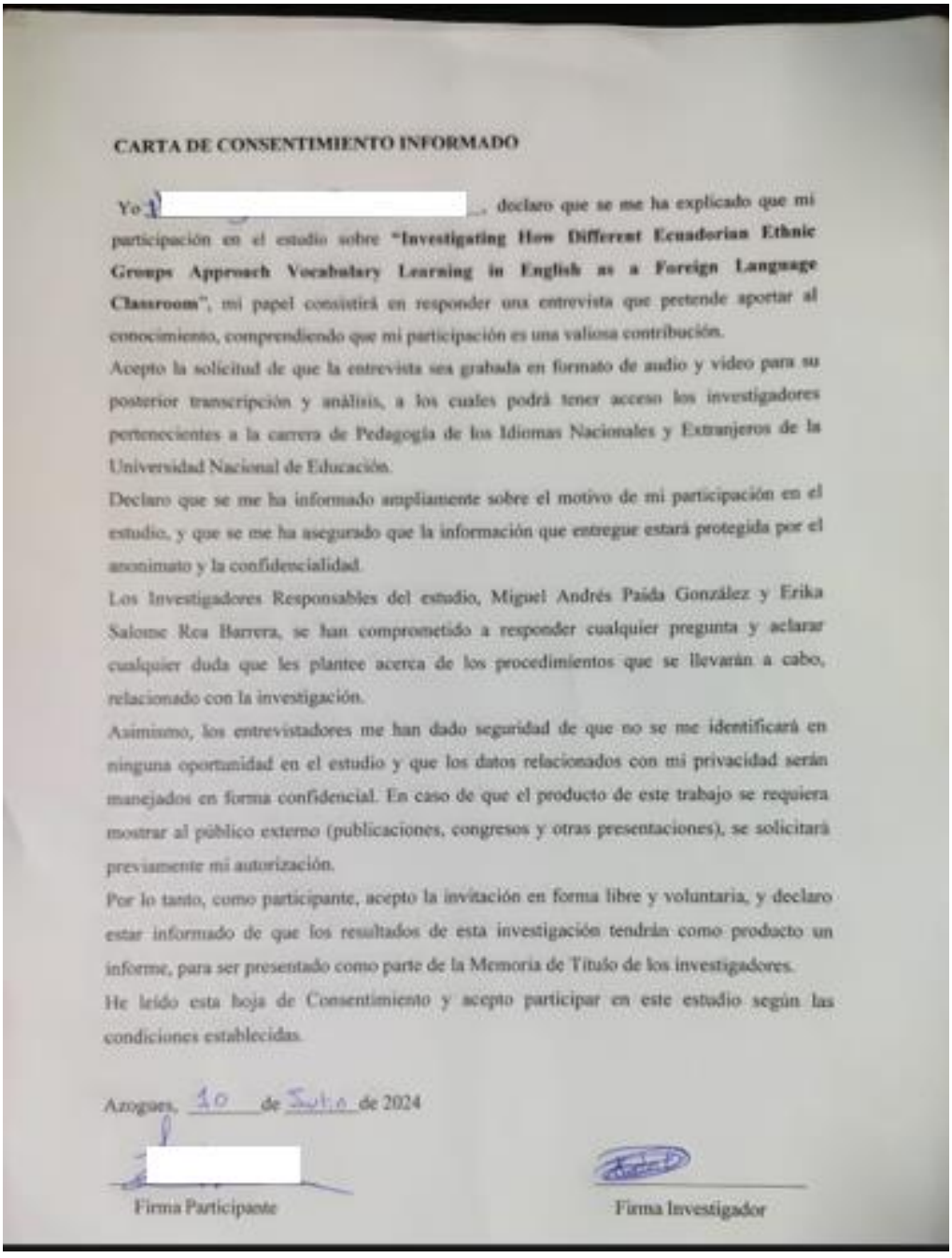
He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

Azogues, 9 de Julio de 2024

[redacted]

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL DE EDUCACIÓN

Participant 2 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo [redacted], declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre **"Investigating How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom"**, mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

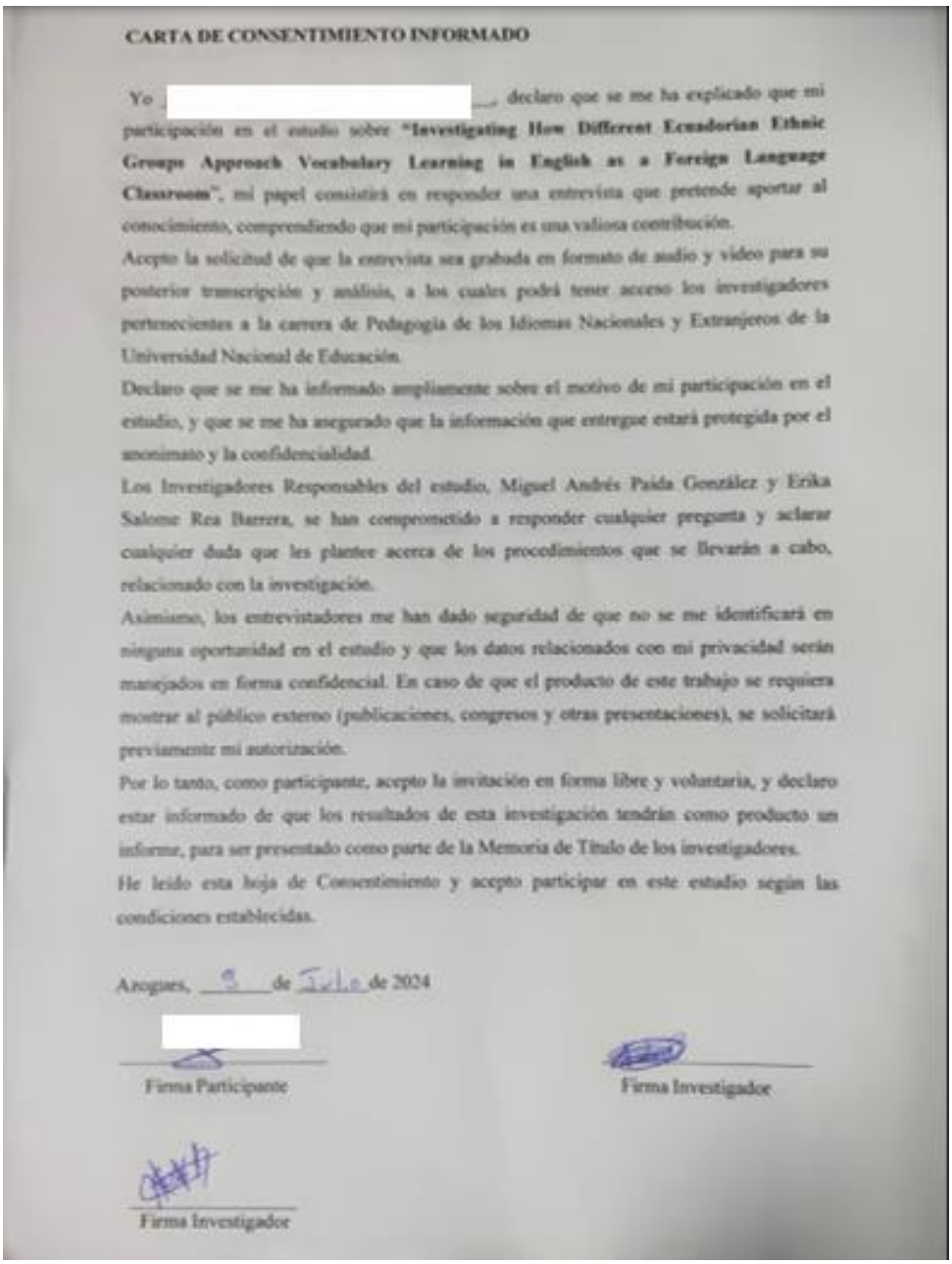
He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

Azogues, 10 de Sept.o de 2024

[redacted]
Firma Participante

Firma Investigador

Participant 3 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo _____, declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre **"Investigating How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom"**, mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

Arogues, 9 de Julio de 2024

_____
Firma Participante

_____
Firma Investigador

_____
Firma Investigador

Participant 4 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo [redacted] declaro que se me ha explicado que mi partic[redacted] **How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom**", mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

Azogues, 2 de Julio de 2024

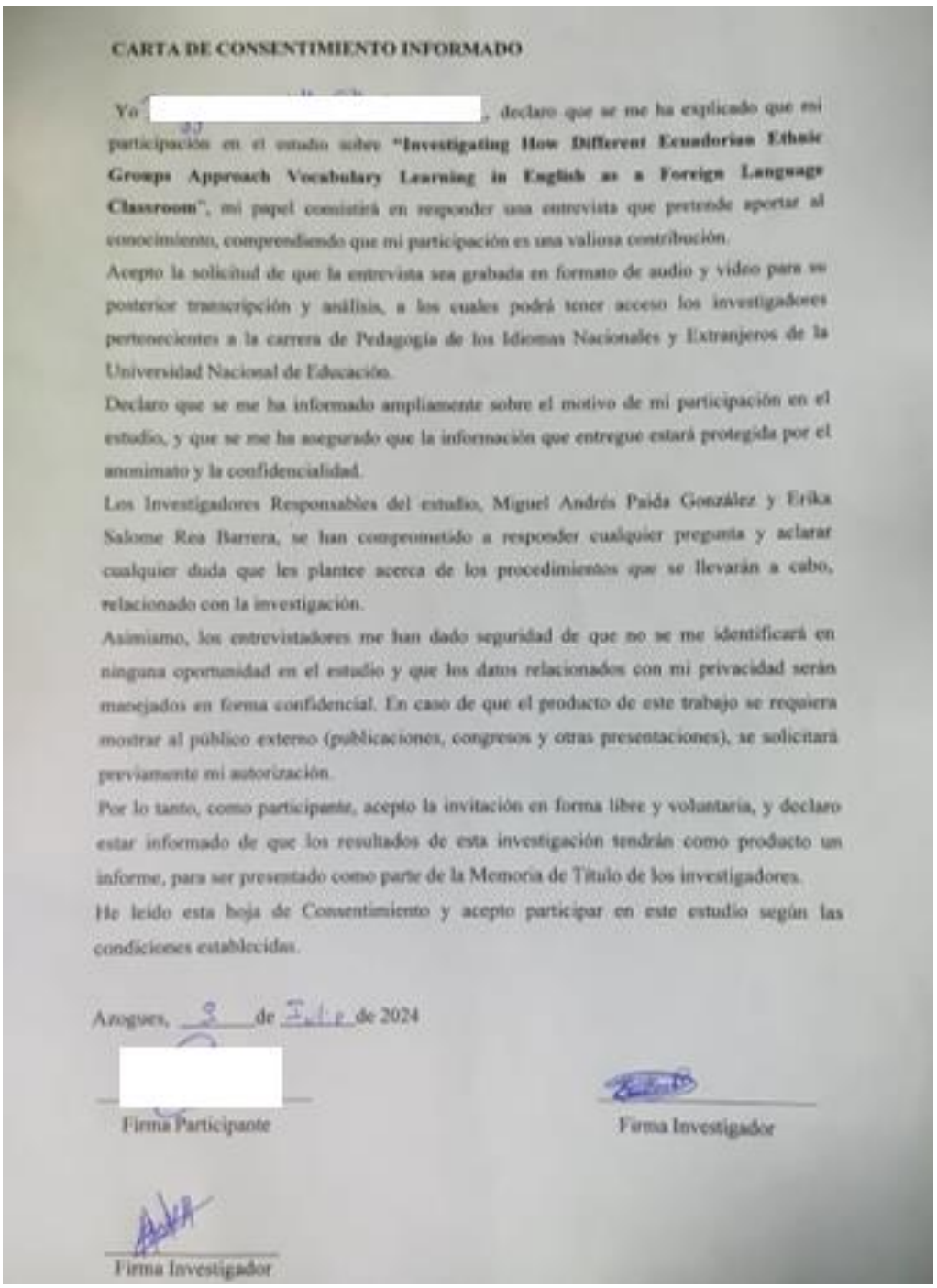
[redacted]

Firma Participante

Firma Investigador

Firma Investigador

Participant 5 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo [redacted], declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre **"Investigating How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom"**, mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han compeometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

Azogues, 3 de Julio de 2024

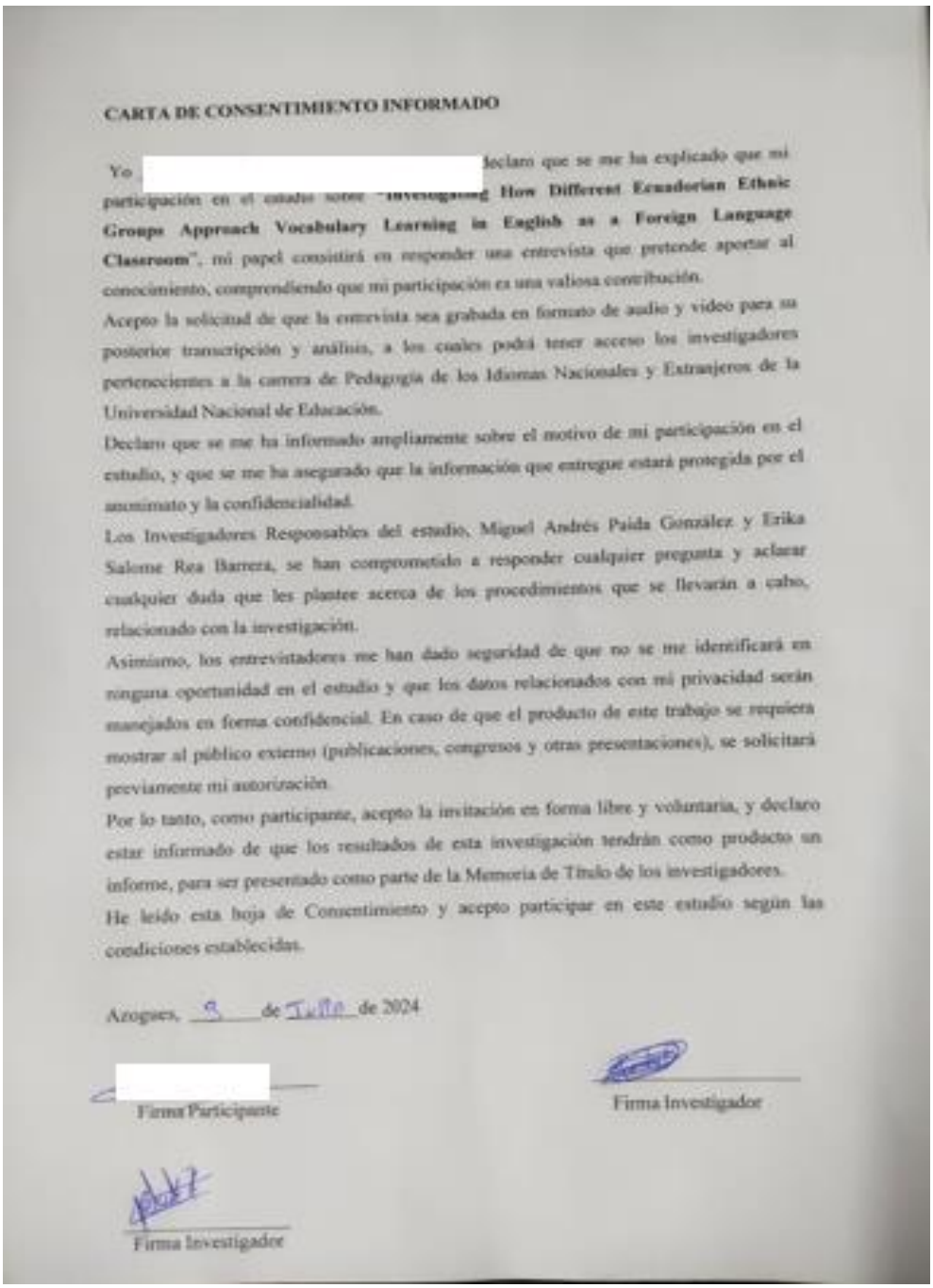
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Firma Participante

Firma Investigador

Firma Investigador

Participant 6 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Yo [redacted] declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre "**[illegible] How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom**", mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

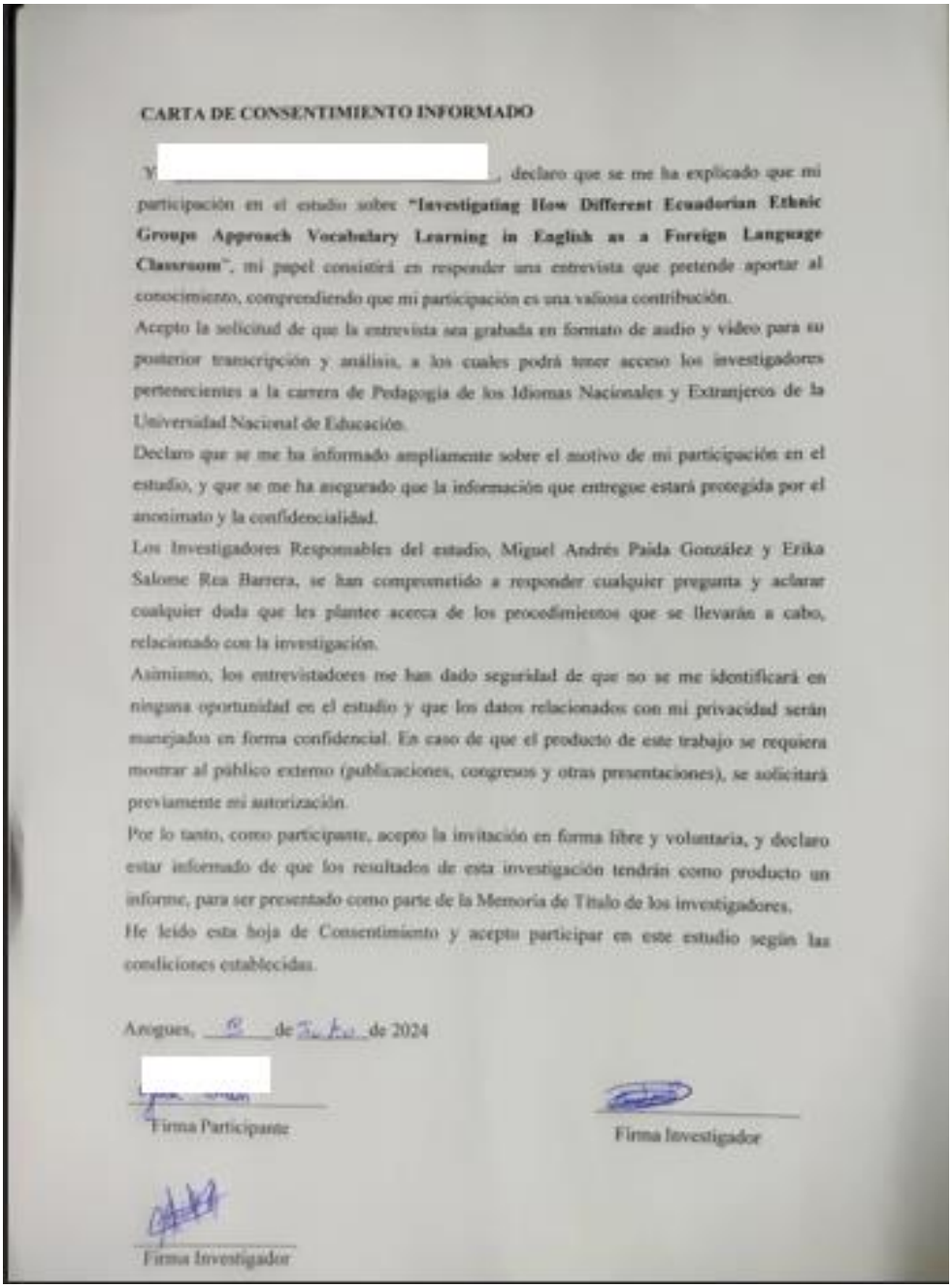
Azogues, 9 de Julio de 2024

[redacted]
Firma Participante

Firma Investigador

Firma Investigador

Participant 7 consent



CARTA DE CONSENTIMIENTO INFORMADO

Y [redacted], declaro que se me ha explicado que mi participación en el estudio sobre **"Investigating How Different Ecuadorian Ethnic Groups Approach Vocabulary Learning in English as a Foreign Language Classroom"**, mi papel consistirá en responder una entrevista que pretende aportar al conocimiento, comprendiendo que mi participación es una valiosa contribución.

Acepto la solicitud de que la entrevista sea grabada en formato de audio y video para su posterior transcripción y análisis, a los cuales podrá tener acceso los investigadores pertenecientes a la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros de la Universidad Nacional de Educación.

Declaro que se me ha informado ampliamente sobre el motivo de mi participación en el estudio, y que se me ha asegurado que la información que entregue estará protegida por el anonimato y la confidencialidad.

Los Investigadores Responsables del estudio, Miguel Andrés Paida González y Erika Salome Rea Barrera, se han comprometido a responder cualquier pregunta y aclarar cualquier duda que les plantee acerca de los procedimientos que se llevarán a cabo, relacionado con la investigación.

Asimismo, los entrevistadores me han dado seguridad de que no se me identificará en ninguna oportunidad en el estudio y que los datos relacionados con mi privacidad serán manejados en forma confidencial. En caso de que el producto de este trabajo se requiera mostrar al público externo (publicaciones, congresos y otras presentaciones), se solicitará previamente mi autorización.

Por lo tanto, como participante, acepto la invitación en forma libre y voluntaria, y declaro estar informado de que los resultados de esta investigación tendrán como producto un informe, para ser presentado como parte de la Memoria de Título de los investigadores.

He leído esta hoja de Consentimiento y acepto participar en este estudio según las condiciones establecidas.

Arogues, 8 de Julio de 2024

[redacted]

Firma Participante

Firma Investigador

Firma Investigador