Strategies to Answer Questions During Writing Activities in a 9th Grade

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Table of Contents

I. Abstract .......................................................................................................................... 3
II. Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 4
III. Context .......................................................................................................................... 5
IV. Research Question ........................................................................................................ 8
V. Rationale ........................................................................................................................ 9
VI. Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 11
1. Democratic Teacher ................................................................................................. 11
2. Feedback ....................................................................................................................... 11
3. Group Work .................................................................................................................. 12
4. Lesson Effectiveness ................................................................................................... 12
5. Lexis ............................................................................................................................. 13
6. Monitoring .................................................................................................................... 14
7. Time Management in the Classroom ........................................................................ 15
8. Writing in the Classroom ........................................................................................... 16
VII. Methodology ............................................................................................................... 17
1. Data Collection Instruments ..................................................................................... 17
   a. Journal ...................................................................................................................... 17
   b. Observation Notes ................................................................................................... 18
   c. Voice Recordings ..................................................................................................... 18
   d. Interview ................................................................................................................ 19
2. Procedures for Data Collection ................................................................................... 19
3. Description of Participants .......................................................................................... 20
4. Description of Interventions ....................................................................................... 21
5. Action Plan Timeline ................................................................................................... 23
VIII. Data Analysis ............................................................................................................. 24
1. Data Analysis and Samples ....................................................................................... 24
   a. Journal ...................................................................................................................... 24
   b. Observation Notes and Voice Recordings .............................................................. 26
   c. Interview with Host Teacher ................................................................................ 32
IX. Reflection and Analysis of Intervention .................................................................... 34
X. Conclusion and Implications ...................................................................................... 39
XI. References .................................................................................................................. 44
XII. Appendix .................................................................................................................... 46
1. Appendix A. Pre and Post Intervention Materials .................................................... 46
2. Appendix B. Lesson Plans ........................................................................................... 48
3. Appendix C. Voice Recordings .................................................................................... 52
4. Appendix D. Interview with Host Teacher ................................................................. 57
Abstract

The following Action Research Project aims at the development of strategies to efficiently answer my 9th grade students’ lexical questions during the course of writing activities. The research question that provided the scope of the investigation is “What strategies can I use to efficiently answer students’ lexical questions during the writing activities of my lessons?” In order to answer this question, I designed an action plan supported by a substantial theoretical framework, that included the implementation of group work activities, and the projection of a pool of lexical items to anticipate students’ questions, which at the same time provided new input to the learners. The results of the interventions revealed that the action plan was coherent and appropriate for my teaching context, and the research question was fully answered. In addition, this investigation led to explore other teaching aspects such as democracy in the classroom and time management.

*Key words: writing activities, feedback, time management, lesson effectiveness.*
Introduction

The following document is a report of an Action Research Project that follows the structure proposed by Anne Burns in her book “Doing Action Research” (2010). The project was carried out in Liceo nº1 Javiera Carrera, and it is a follow up of all the steps that were completed to improve both my own teaching practice and the development of the English language of my 9th grade students.

Furthermore, in order to arrive at a better understanding of the cycle that characterizes a research of this design, this project is divided into the following sections: a Context that depicts the characteristics of the school, class, and students that were intervened, as well as the problems that emerged from my teaching practice; a Research Question, which provides a focus for the following procedures of the research; a Rationale, necessary to explain the importance that this project has for me and all the individuals involved in it; a Literature Review that provides a theoretical framework to understand the key concepts of the research; the Methodology, a report of the methods used to collect appropriate data; Data Analysis, a deep reflection on the previously mentioned data; a Reflection and Analysis of Intervention, which offers a critical deliberation of the execution of my action plan; and the Conclusion and Implications, which summarize and round off this Action Research Project, and offer extensive and insightful reflections regarding my current and future teaching practice.
Context

Liceo nº1 Javiera Carrera is located in Compañía de Jesús Street, in downtown Santiago, Chile. It is a public school for girls between 7th and 12th grade, and it has been entitled across the country as an “Emblematic School” due to its many academic accomplishments. These achievements are mostly related to national standardized testing assessments – most specifically SIMCE (Education Quality Measurement System) and PSU (University Selection Test). Moreover, the institution is very explicit when mentioning in its webpage that “all technical and pedagogical efforts are focused on improving the previous year’s scores” referring to SIMCE and PSU (“Logros Académicos,” n.d./2015), and that its mission is “to train upright women who are able to enter higher education, facing a constantly changeable society” (“Reseña Histórica,” n.d./2015).

Nowadays, Liceo nº1 hosts approximately 3,500 students and 127 teachers. Furthermore, some of the important figures that graduated from this institution include the current President of the Republic, Michelle Bachelet, and the worldwide known writer Isabel Allende.

For this Action Research Project, I problematized and reflected on my own teaching practice with a 9th grade. There were 45 students in the class and their age fluctuated between 14 and 15 years of age. According to the psychosocial stages of life drafted by developmental psychologist and psychoanalyst Erikson (1959), these students were going through a period of time in which their identities were in a constant state of tension with a confusion of their role in life. In other words, these girls were continuously wondering about who they were, where they were going in life, and whether they fit or not in their own social context.

In terms of classroom environment, students in general got along quite well. There were no disruptions due to problems among them at all, and they were very respectful and protective to each other. They were also well mannered, polite, and respectful towards authorities.
For the English lessons, students used an Oxford textbook called *Solutions* (Falla & Davies, 2012) so as to develop their English skills. This book – which was selected by the school’s English Department to enhance the learning-teaching process – is currently used across all levels, from 7th to 12th grade, and it contains ten units of content, each unit divided into seven interconnected parts. It is necessary to mention that each part of the unit has a specific purpose, for instance Unit 1 is divided into 1A Vocabulary and Listening, 1B Grammar, 1C Culture, 1D Grammar, 1E Reading, 1F Speaking, and 1G Writing. Students are to complete five out of ten units per year, using one book for two English courses.

The other resources used by the students are the computer laboratories, where students attended once every three weeks, in addition to two English novels also selected by the English Department per year. In terms of assessment, teachers at this school have the liberty to choose any type of assessment process they find pertinent for each specific objective. In the 9th grade I was teaching, the host teacher had always decided to apply a multiple alternative test after the completion of each unit, a multiple alternative test after reading the novels, and a “Level Test” at the end of each semester, which was also a multiple alternative test. In addition to that, students must take two Key (KET) mock tests per semester.

When I started teaching this class, I introduced and developed a communicative approach – contrasted to the grammar-translation method that was implemented before – which included the implementation of classroom language, pair work and teamwork, and writing activities. In Liceo n°1, the English Department had decided to focus on the development of the two receptive skills only. Nonetheless, I decided to include writing activities which could enhance the language learning process and complement reading and listening tasks. The reasoning behind the inclusion of writing activities relies on the importance of producing output; Swain specified the following in *The Output Hypothesis: Theory and Research*: “The output hypothesis claims that the act of
producing language (speaking and writing) constitutes, under certain circumstances, part of the process of second language learning” (Swain, 2005, p. 471).

In terms of planning, I decided to stick to the lesson planning structure proposed by the English Language Teaching Program at Alberto Hurtado University, and to separate my lessons into three significant parts: A pre stage, in which I taught vocabulary and engaged students with the topic; a while stage, in which students did grammar in context, listening or reading activities; and a post stage, in which students developed writing tasks related to the topic of the lesson. During the closure stage, I implemented an exit ticket in which students had to write one thing they learned during the lesson, and one thing they liked about the lesson. These tickets were used to obtain feedback regarding my lessons, to improve upon my following sessions, and to check whether the learning objective was met during the lessons or not.

In spite of all the positivity of transitioning from one teaching approach to a different one, there were still problems within my lessons, which were directly related to my own teaching practice, and more specifically, to the way I was answering questions and providing learners with feedback during the course of the writing tasks. Since this 9th grade was a large multilevel class, there were moments in which a considerable number of learners needed to ask questions, or needed me to help them organize and focus their writing, or simply to tell them that their writing was on the right path. The nature of these questions was mostly vocabulary-oriented. With 45 students in the classroom, it was complicated, and sometimes impossible, to assist all of them, and I usually ended up ignoring some students, and neglecting the improvement of their written English. As a consequence, I did not have enough time to complete all the activities I had previously planned, and some parts of my lesson plans were shortened or simply not completed.
Research Question

Considering the context and the problems related to my 9th grade English class, and more specifically to the way in which I answered questions and provided students with feedback during the production stage, I raised the following question:

What strategies can I use to efficiently answer students’ lexical questions during the writing activities of my lessons?
Rationale

With regard to the importance and relevance of this project, which pursues to achieve the development of strategies to efficiently answer questions during the writing activities of my 9th grade lessons, there are three reasons that support this study. The first one rests on the importance of providing all students with effective immediate feedback; the second one is related to the importance of implementing all the steps of my lesson plans and using my time wisely; and the last one is the importance of producing written output.

In relation to the benefits that this project might provide, there are mainly three groups of people that are directly involved: The students, the teacher, and other teachers who have similar classroom problems. As this project aims at the development of strategies to effectively answer questions and provide students with feedback during the writing activities of my lessons, students will benefit enormously, since they will receive more focalized and appropriate feedback. This will help them produce better output in their written tasks. Furthermore, as Action Research is a reflective practice, I as a professional will be profoundly benefited from the results of the research. These outcomes will help me to enrich the methodology of my lessons, and also to deal in a better way with large classes. Additionally, my self-confidence and self-awareness will increase as well. Finally, I believe that it is highly relevant to the Foreign Language Teaching field to share my findings, so as to contribute to Spanish-speaking contexts that aim at having better educational methodologies. Likewise, and more specifically, this Action Research Project would be of help to those teachers who, like me, are in the position of dealing with classes with a large number of students and wish to be more democratic while helping their students.

Moreover, the outcome that I expect to achieve is to help students be more autonomous when looking for the meaning of vocabulary items. Personally, I would like to implement
teamwork strategies to answer questions, which would generate an environment of trust and companionship within the classroom. I also expect to become more skillful when managing large multilevel classes, and to be a more democratic teacher who is able to equally provide all students with meaningful feedback.
**Literature Review**

The following section is a presentation of definitions and key concepts that are closely related to this investigation. These concepts were selected so as to provide the reader with a theoretical framework, and to arrive at a deeper understanding of the implications, theories, practices, and interventions of my research. In addition, renowned authors and relevant ELT websites were selected to draft the literature of this project.

**Democratic Teacher**

In 2012, Zuosheng Sun from the School of Foreign Languages, Shandong Youth University of Political Science, China, published a research that investigated the topic of teacher-students relationship. Here, the writer focused on the concept of democracy, and the attitudes that teachers should have in order to become democratic in the ELT context. In the conclusions (2012, p. 181), Sun proposes that teachers “pay more attention to students’ affective factors, such as anxiety, inhibition, extroversion-introversion, motivation, learning styles, and classroom transactions.” Moreover, all these considerations must be applied with equality to all students, without neglecting anybody’s needs, problems, and struggles.

**Feedback**

According to Ur (1996), this concept refers to the input that teachers give to learners about their performances. The main purpose of giving feedback to students is to help them enhance their performance. Additionally, assessment and correction are two concepts that are closely related to feedback; while assessment is the information of how well or badly a student performed, correction is specific information regarding the students’ language performances.
In addition, Ur (1996) states that many teachers consider that feedback is only the correction of mistakes; however, “correction can and should include information on what the learner did right, as well as wrong, and why!” (p. 242).

With regard to the writing skill, Scrivener (2005) mentions that it is essential to provide students with feedback while they are actually writing, and not after the written tasks have been completed. Actually, he emphasizes, “the most useful comments are those that will have an impact as the writing is evolving” (p. 199). Scrivener also states that useful feedback can come from as many readers as possible, be it the teacher, or other fellow students.

**Group Work**

For this research, the concept of group work has emerged as a response towards the teaching problem. Hess explains that group work is “a natural framework for the way ideas are worked with in the real world” (2001, p. 112). She highlights that, on the whole, working in groups can lead students to learn from one another, and teachers to use cooperation as a tool for learning and communication. The author also mentions that in large multilevel classes, this type of interaction is a key element to enhance growth and practice in the target language.

Notwithstanding, Hess also establishes that there are certain difficulties triggered by group work, since certain learners as can consider a team as “a hidey-hole for the student who somehow assumes that the group’s progress is automatically his/her own progress” (2001, p. 112).

However, the writer advises “patient, consistent effort, and careful training to form effective group work” (2001, p. 112) to teachers.

**Lesson Effectiveness**

Most teachers constantly wonder whether their lessons are being effectively implemented. Here, effectiveness is a polarizing word, since the achievement of this
effectiveness relies on many factors, and is evaluated by several criteria. According to Ur (1996, p. 219), there are five different criteria that assess lesson effectiveness: 1) The students’ activeness, attentiveness, and enjoyment; 2) the learning of the content or material; 3) the accordance between the lesson plan and the final implementation of the plan; 4) the communicative use of the foreign language throughout; and 5) the engagement of the learners with the foreign language throughout.

For this Action Research Project, it is necessary to highlight the third criterion: The concordance between the lesson plan, and the results of this lesson plan in the classroom context. Ur states that it is likely that a lesson “that went on the whole according to plan is more likely to be effective” (p. 220); nonetheless, a teacher must always be sensitive and flexible enough so as to deviate from the original plan, and adapt the lesson plan to the students’ needs and contexts.

**Lexis**

According to Scrivener, *Lexis* is a concept broader than *Vocabulary*. While Vocabulary simply refers to single words – or two or three words tightly linked (such as *sky blue*, or *compact disc*), Lexis is a bigger concept defined as an internal database of words and combinations of words “that we can recall and use quite quickly.” (p. 227).

In the ELT context, Lexis is of considerable importance, mainly because it is a carrier of meaning in the beginning stages of the language learning process, individuals tend to simply use words to convey messages, avoiding grammatical rules. Additionally, Scrivener argues that the more words a person has, the more specific the conveyance of meaning is, though getting acquainted with foreign lexis is quite difficult. This difficulty rests on the idea that “lexical items live within their own languages” (p. 228), which is the main argument to avoid translation or code switching while teaching lexical units.
Nonetheless, other authors, such as Weinreich (1970) and Skiba (1997) support the idea of translating lexical items depending on the context, especially when there are time constraints. Their arguments are, first of all, that code switching allows speakers to express themselves with more fluency, and secondly, that it allows transferring the information from the sender to the receiver in a more effective fashion.

**Monitoring**

Monitoring is a classroom management technique which is focused on providing students with feedback, as well as to check if students are on task, and carrying out the activities as planned. According to Steve Darn, who wrote an article on Monitoring for the British Council in 2006, Monitoring is a pivotal teaching strategy that “needs to be developed if learners are to benefit fully from activities” (2006). Darn also mentions that monitoring is an activity that goes on all the time, but most specifically during the development of the two productive skills: Speaking and writing. Moreover, during the writing stage teachers should point out errors, and encourage self-correction.

In his article, Darn also mentions that there are several purposes. The ones I consider are more relevant and appropriate to understand this Action Research Project are the following:

- Being aware of the whole class, taking into account its pace, and the students that might need individual attention,
- Taking opportunities to implement micro-teachings to help students who struggle with the target language,
- Analyzing the needs and difficulties of the group and the individuals,
- Adding input, feed, and ideas to keep activities alive,
- Assessing the successfulness of the tasks implemented by the teacher,
- Maintaining discipline, specially in large groups,
• And readjusting, changing, or improving the planning – whether it is future lesson plans, or the one that is implemented in the moment.

Additionally, Darn concludes that the constant presence of a teacher monitoring the class “guarantees the best performance from the learner,” and prevents students from abandoning the tasks, or lapsing into the mother tongue.

**Time Management in the Classroom**

Time management is a mental skill that, when developed, can help people organize, schedule, and budget their time in order to be more effective and productive. In the ELT field, managing time is a difficult task, mainly because, according to the “Time Management Strategies” Scholastic article (n.d.) it “is the thread running through almost all aspects of teaching — organizing the day, organizing the classroom, deciding how long and how often to teach various subjects, recording student progress, or keeping time-consuming behavior problems to a minimum.” In other words, teachers are bound to organize their time so as to enhance and secure their productivity, and to guide their students towards the accomplishment of the learning objectives.

Additionally, Dr Abdulla Mahmoud Ismail Ammar, assistant professor of TEFL at Riyadh Teachers’ College, King Saud University, Saudi Arabia, declared in his Time Management Strategies-related Action Research, - which was a study on pre-service EFL teachers - that “EFL prospective teachers were found to suffer a set of problems relevant to poor instructional time management” (p. 2). Among the problems the author encountered, he highlighted that pre-service teachers had not being taught time management skills at college, which led to a decrease of motivation and unsuccessful attainment in learning situations.

Now, back to the Scholastic article, one of the strategies proposed in the text is the delegation of tasks. “Aides, volunteers, and students can handle many classroom tasks and save
you enormous amounts of time,” which saves the teacher time to accomplish other tasks, namely effective monitoring, the delivery of instant feedback, and more focalized, individual assistance.

**Writing in the Classroom**

Scrivener considers that in the early 1990s “many people wrote very little day by day” (p. 192), but nowadays there has been an increase in written communication. Nonetheless, he thinks that the need for the development of the writing skill has lessened within the English classrooms, but several reasons support the implementation of written work. Some of these reasons are: The specific needs of some students, the necessity to take notes during lessons, and the development of different kinds of mental processes (such as thinking, reflecting, preparing, rehearsing, making mistakes, and finding alternative and better solutions).

One of the strategies that the author proposes for developing writing skills in the classroom is Guided Writing, which is defined as the following: “You guide your students to write longer texts in quite restricted or controlled tasks by offering samples, models, possibly useful language items, advice, organizational frameworks, etc” (p. 193).
Methodology

As previously stated, this section of my Action Research Project corresponds to the definition and description of the different methods I used to collect data. Moreover, I will include the justification and reasons behind the selection of these instruments, and why I considered they were pertinent and coherent with my research context, problem, and question. In addition, I will present a description of the research participants, and a detailed explanation of the intervention.

Data Collection Instruments

Journal. Journals and logs are quite common in Action Research, mainly because “they are extremely useful though as a way of capturing significant reflections and events in an ongoing way” (Burns, 2010, p. 89). Additionally, this tool serves the purpose of organizing and recording relevant events, happenings, reflections and ideas about the researcher’s teaching practice. Nonetheless, it is unlikely that this instrument can be used by itself, and it is strongly advised to complement the information gathered from journals with the data collected from other instruments.

The type of journal I decided was suitable for this study was a weekly log that aimed “to construct an ongoing record of daily or weekly events” (Burns, 2010, p. 90). This tool will be used throughout the whole Data Analysis section to contrast and support information obtained from the other data collection instruments I selected and used. The journal I wrote contains nine entries, each entry has an average of 400 words, and each entry is divided into two parts: The first one is thoughtful reflection on the weekly events, and the second one is a summarizing box which sums up the “Aspects that worked” and the “Aspects that did not work.”

During the first stage of the writing process of this journal, I compared and contrasted my lesson plans against my own practice, to further reflect on the positive and the negative aspects
of each of my English sessions. I consciously included a summarizing box at the end of each entry where I referred to what worked and what did not work during the course of my lessons; this box was included since keeping a written register of those two specific aspects would offer me a more substantial ground to compare them before and after my intervention.

**Observation notes.** Observation notes are generally done in a descriptive and narrative style. They do not necessarily have a structure. According to Burns, these notes are made by the researcher or other research participants, and must be an account of what happens in the classroom, “including – depending what you are focusing on – the physical layout, verbal and non-verbal information, the structure of the groups, or the sequences of activities and tasks” (Burns, 2010, p. 67).

For this research I wrote reflective observations, which “are notes written about classroom events with the researcher’s comments placed next to them” (Burns, 2010, p. 68). These notes were added in a column next to each step of my lesson plans (lesson plans were created by the Practicum Department in Alberto Hurtado University), which provided me with specific information of how I managed time, the activities that required more time for completion, and the moments of the class in which I spent too much time answering questions.

This instrument was applied after the intervention, and was useful to assess and compare my time management skills, contrasted with my journal entries written before the intervention.

A sample of the lesson plan template with the “Observations” column included can be found in the Appendix section (see Appendix A).

**Voice recordings.** The third data collection instrument I used was voice recording. According to Burns, recordings are complementary to direct observations, since recordings can capture “oral interactions exactly as they were said” (p. 70). Burns also states that audio-recordings are much easier to set up than video-recordings, and are positively unnoticeable.
Since recording students might be a little inconvenient – being recorded is not exactly something students enjoy –, it was necessary to voice-record more than one English lesson, “so that they get used to having the equipment present” (p. 70).

This instrument was applied after executing the action plan, and offered the opportunity to compare the successfulness or failure of the intervention. It is necessary to clarify that voice recordings were obtained exclusively during the writing tasks, and not before, so as to maintain the pace and rhythm of the previous lesson steps.

**Interview.** The last data collection instrument I selected was a semi-structured, or guided interview. According to Burns, this type or interview is controlled but still flexible and open. The author explicates “you have a set of topics in mind that you want to explore and you may also have developed some specific questions, but you will allow for some flexibility according to how the interviewee responds” (2010, p. 75).

For this project, I decided to interview my host teacher, who spent time observing my lessons, and giving me feedback after them. This teacher has been working on the English Teaching field for 25 years, and has spent 13 years working at Liceo n°1 Javiera Carrera. Moreover, she was appointed Coordinator of the English Department at school two years ago. Her perspective offered more insight about my own practice, and most of all, objectivity about the outcomes of the strategies I developed to intervene this class. Questions asked to the host teacher can be found in the Appendix section (see Appendix A).

**Procedures for Data Collection**

First and foremost, it is necessary to mention that the process of data collection for this Action Research Project started at the very beginning of my practicum, in which I analyzed my teaching journal in order to contextualize my class and to problematize my teaching
methodologies. This journal, the conversations I had with my practicum tutor, other teacher trainers, and other student teachers as well were pivotal for the definition of my research question.

Regarding the instruments I described in the previous section, all four of them were applied at different stages of the data collection process. First I analyzed my journal entries. Secondly, I simultaneously recorded my students’ interactions with me during the writing tasks and took the observation notes in my lesson plans. Lastly, I interviewed my host teacher to obtain a more objective and reliable perspective about the effectiveness of my intervention.

During the lessons in which I applied the interventions, I recorded the student-teacher individual interactions. This instrument offered me the chance to analyze the exact amount of time I spent with each student, the number of students I could provide with feedback each session, and the strategies I used to answer questions. Concurrently, I took notes next to my lesson plans, which complemented the voice-recordings, and offered more insight about my own considerations regarding my teaching practice in the exact moment that I was teaching.

Description of Participants

The direct participants of this research, and more specifically the group of people who benefited from the outcomes of this study, were the 9th grade students and the English teacher intern.

On the one hand, there were 45 students in this class with 14 to 15 year old girls only, and the level of English varied from student to student. Consequently, this was a pedagogically challenging class, mainly because of the large number of participants, and the multi-level characteristic that it had. Those two aspects derived into mixed abilities, motivational issues, and variation of needs, interests and goals from the students’ part. Needless to say, those two features
of the class had a direct impact on the fashion in which lessons were carried out, since all these aspects had to be considered before planning and implementing lessons.

On the other hand, I, the 9th grade English teacher, am a Chilean pre-service teacher. I am 24 years old in the present, and I have been studying English for seven years, and have been in the Alberto Hurtado University English Teaching Program since 2012. I carried out this research in order to obtain a bachelor degree as an English teacher. It is necessary to highlight that I had never worked with large classes before, which turned this practicum into a more challenging and enriching experience.

**Description of Interventions**

The intervention I decided to apply in the 9th grade was a combination and adaptation of suggestions, teaching strategies, and methodological guidelines from different authors and sources. To comprehend in depth the nature of the intervention, I will first mention the sources I selected to plan it, to further explain the steps I designed and followed.

First and foremost, it is essential to understand that the concept of Group Work was the starting point to implement this intervention. Many sources and ELT authors have referred to group work as ideal when teachers have to deal with large classes. For instance, Brown listed four advantages to promote group work in ESL and EFL contexts (2010, p. 178-179), of which two of them were appropriate for my teaching practice: The generation of interactive language and the promotion of learner responsibility and autonomy. Those were aspects that I had not seen very often in my class, and for that reason, they were interesting to explore and achieve. In addition to that, Hess suggested in her book Teaching Large Multilevel Classes that one strategy to provide students with meaningful feedback is to let them correct one another since “the reader of student-produced texts need not necessarily always be the teacher” (2001, p. 79). Finally, in the TESOL Connections article “Essential Strategies for Teaching Large Classes,” Brady
ANSWERING QUESTIONS DURING WRITING ACTIVITIES

recommended to increase students’ responsibilities by “assigning regular team leaders who liaise with the teacher” (2013, p. 2), and by encouraging peer assessment (2013, p. 3). One aspect that all these authors agree with is the idea that delegating responsibilities is a must-do in large classes, since it encourages and promotes communication and negotiation of meaning among students.

From this starting point, I designed a lesson intervention that followed the next steps: In first place, I divided the class into groups of four. Each group had been previously structured, including students with different levels of proficiency. I made sure that in each group there was at least one highly proficient student, and I picked those students taking into consideration their grades and their class participation and commitment. Secondly, I asked them to appoint one representative from each group; that person was in charge of collecting the group’s doubts and questions, and communicating them to the teacher. The rule was that every three or four questions, group representatives would raise their hands or walk towards the teacher, and negotiate different lexical items they were hesitant about. After questions were answered, the group representative would go back to the group and share, offering the opportunity to enhance the group’s writing, and also to share information that was useful for all participants.

However, I considered that organizing the groups and delegating the responsibility to socialize knowledge would be enhanced by the inclusion of other tools. For that reason, I decided to offer students a “pool of useful words” before they started to write. This pool of words was projected on the whiteboard, and it included words and vocabulary items carefully selected and with a very explicit meaning. For example, most words were presented with a picture or drawing, and all of them were closely related to the topic of the lesson. The reasoning behind including this pool of vocabulary items was to anticipate questions that might have come up, and to expose students to language input they could react to, and, hopefully, include in their
writings. Samples of the “pools of words” I used in the implementation of the action plan can be found in the Appendix section (see Appendix A).

**Action Plan Timeline**

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<tr>
<th>Activities / Dates</th>
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<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
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<td>- Writing journal</td>
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<td>- Defining methodology and instruments for data collection</td>
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<td>- Preliminary journal analysis</td>
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<td>- Recording audios of the class</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Taking reflective observation notes in lesson plans</td>
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<td>- Transcribing audios</td>
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<td>- Interviewing host teacher</td>
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<td>- Analysing results</td>
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<td>- Reflecting about results</td>
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<td>- Final presentation</td>
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Fig. 1 Action Plan Timeline
Data Analysis

The following segment of this research attempts to analyze and reflect upon the data collected prior to, during, and after the intervention stage. Samples obtained from the data collected will be included to understand the section in depth.

Data Analysis and Samples

Journal. The first instrument to be analyzed is my weekly log. As I explained in the Methodology section, this journal was used to register the most relevant events, happenings, ideas and reflections surrounding my teaching practice on a weekly basis. The following analysis will consist in the comparison of journal entries registered before and after the implementation of the action plan.

The comparison of these two moments of my teaching practice demonstrates large differences between what happened before and after the intervention. The first comparison shredded light on how differently I perceived the writing task delivery. The journal entries written in September were characterized by a negative feeling in the closing of the lesson, as it can be seen in the entry of September 22nd, in which I mentioned, “It was impossible for me to answer all of their questions, and it made me feel frustrated” (Sánchez, S. Personal journal, September 22, 2015). As a matter of fact, certain parts related to the productive stage were included in the “Aspects that did not work” section of the summary boxes. Contrastively, reflective journal entries written after the intervention have a more positive note, and the writing tasks are straightforwardly related to positive comments and progress overall, such as “with regard to the new way of negotiating meaning, I believe it worked very well” (Sánchez, S. Personal journal, November 24, 2015). Moreover, writing activities were included in the “Aspects that worked” section of the summary box.
The second comparison offered more insight about the affective factors embedded in the class during these tasks. In journal entries registered prior to the intervention, I did not register information regarding the affective factors enhanced or mitigated during my lessons, which is proof that I had already got used to the classroom dynamics that, as previously mentioned, did not promote pair work of group work. However, in the entries registered after the action plan, I explicitly mentioned the improvement in the behavior and the dynamics of the group as a whole: “Monitoring groups was a lot easier, since I didn’t have the pressure of all students yelling and asking for help” (Sánchez, S. Personal journal, November 24, 2015), and most importantly, that students “understood the dynamic of taking turns to ask for questions, to raise their hands without yelling, and to respect other people’s turns” (Sánchez, S. Personal journal, November 25, 2015). These changes were mainly based on the fact that students worked together towards the same goal, and complemented each other’s skills in order to achieve the objective of the task.

The third comparison was directly related to the methodology of my lessons. During the pre-intervention lesson reflections I constantly referred to my difficulties to manage my time, and to complete all previously planned activities on a timely manner, as depicted in the following extract: “Even though this lesson was planned for 1.30 min, I had to split this lesson into two parts” (Sánchez, S. Personal journal, September 22, 2015) Nonetheless, in post-intervention journal entries I registered that none of the activities had to be cancelled in order to ensure the proper delivery of the productive tasks, and that both lessons were closed with the exit ticket, which is something that had not happened in previous lessons.

In a nutshell, entries written before and after the intervention shred light on the benefits of the intervention, and the positive changes obtained offer more insight about the improvement of my time management skills, and the improvement of the relations within the classroom.
**Observation Notes and Voice Recordings.** The second and third instruments selected to register evidence for this project correspond to the observation notes included in my lessons plans, and taken while delivering lessons, and the voice recordings obtained throughout the course of the writing activities during and after the intervention. The data gathered from these two instruments was collected simultaneously; therefore, the analysis will present both instruments in parallel. Furthermore, the observation notes taken prior to the implementation of the action plan were collected on September 21\textsuperscript{st} and on November 17\textsuperscript{th}, 2015. Likewise, post-intervention notes were taken on November 24\textsuperscript{th} and November 25\textsuperscript{th}, 2015. Voice recordings were obtained on the same dates as the post-intervention observation notes.

It is necessary to highlight that the samples of my lesson plans included below present some differences to the original lesson plan templates. To present and explain the data collected through this instrument, I decided to eliminate some categories, and only the most relevant ones were kept. Complete lesson plans are shown in the Appendix B section.

The comparison between the data collected before and after the intervention through these two instruments is quite explicative to understand the successfulness of the action plan. Observation notes taken before implementing the intervention inform of the pedagogical decisions made before and after the writing tasks, and lead to understand that I cancelled or shortened certain activities or lesson stages in order to allot the necessary amount of time to complete the productive stage. For example, on one of the notes taken during a pre-intervention lesson, and more specifically during a listening activity before the writing task, I stated, “I believe it’s best not to include this activity. Maybe two activities with receptive skills are too much. Besides, students won’t have enough time to complete the writing task.” Moreover, notes taken during the closure stage of my lessons explain that the aforementioned stage had to be
cancelled several times since the productive stage was either incomplete or extended until the last moment of the lesson, leaving no extra time to complete and collect the exit tickets.

Additionally, these notes highlight the necessity to implement new strategies to answer all students’ questions so as to be more democratic, and reflect the struggle that I was going through while dealing with this large class, as explicated in a note taken during the September 21st lesson. Here, I argued “This [the productive stage] is a complicated moment since I have too many students and I can’t assist all of them.” (To see full pre-intervention lesson plans with observations notes, please check Appendix B).

Figure 2 depicts the reasoning behind the pedagogical and methodological decisions made during the pre-action plan lessons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>LESSON STEPS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will be able to write a narrative story.</td>
<td>3. Post</td>
<td>Writing activity</td>
<td>Teacher checks students’ writing plan while monitoring.</td>
<td>6 minutes</td>
<td>Students take a lot of time during the writing plan. They focus on answering the questions as if it were the main task rather that the final piece. While they write, a lot of students stand up and ask questions. This is a complicated moment since I have too many students and I can’t assist all of them. I fear some students might feel ignored, or that their writings might not be as good as the one from students I help. Since they took more time on the writing plan, the writing activity cannot be fully completed. I tell students they can bring me their tasks next class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Closure</td>
<td>Students write on a piece of paper two new things they learned today, and one thing they liked about the lesson.</td>
<td>Teacher provides students with feedback while monitoring.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrast, observation notes gathered after the action plan, which were complemented with voice recordings recorded during the course of the writing activities, show more efficiency and skill while managing time. This is exemplified first by the fact that no previous activities had to be cancelled, and second by the post-intervention notes taken during the closure activities. One of these notes says, “Activity works pretty well, and students hand their exit tickets in before the bell rings for recess.”
Regarding the necessity to implement these new strategies, observation notes explain that the action plan was both appropriate for this class, and coherent with the teaching context. These notes make reference to the role of the chosen representatives, and how able they were to play their roles. In the observation notes, I mentioned that “Representatives are responsible, and most of them are very calm when asking questions,” and also that “Representatives make a line in front of me to ask questions, and wait for their turns while their other classmates continue working on the task.” These notes shred light about the importance of delegating responsibilities, and how this positively impacts the functioning of group work, leading learners to be more committed with their tasks and classmates, thus enabling more effectiveness while monitoring and providing feedback. (To see full post-intervention lesson plans with observations notes, please check Appendix B).

Figure 2.1 includes observations notes taken after intervening this 9th grade. These remarks offer insight about the role of the representatives, the usefulness of the pool of words, and the improvement of my time management skills.
**OBJECTIVES**  | **LESSON STEPS** | **ACTIVITIES** | **ASSESSMENT** | **TIME** | **OBSERVATIONS**
--- | --- | --- | --- | --- | ---
Students can write a horror story. | 3. Post  
Productive skills  
Lang. awareness  
Practice  
Function | **Writing activity**  
Students get together in same groups they worked in the previous writing activity.  
Students appoint one representative to ask questions to the teacher.  
Students brainstorm about a horror story.  
Teacher reminds the structure of the story and outlines it.  
*Paragraph 1 – Introduction*  
*Paragraph 2 – Body*  
*Paragraph 3 – Conclusion*  
Teacher projects pool of useful vocabulary.  
Students write the story. | Students share their drawings and then find a common thread to join each of their parts. Each student must write their own part of the story, and can use the pool of words to complement their writings. | 30 minutes | Students get together in their groups immediately. They agree to keep the same group representatives they appointed the previous lesson. Brainstorm activity requires a bit more of time. I monitor groups while they brainstorm and help them organize their ideas. Representatives make a line in front of me to ask questions, and wait for their turns while their other classmates continue working on the task. While monitoring, I also receive a couple of questions; students want to know if the way they are trying to include the vocabulary from the pool of words is correct. I help them with that, since it was only a helping device, I didn’t pre-teach this vocabulary. Maybe I should give a little explanation about these words before just presenting them, or maybe add the lexical category they correspond to. Students hand in their exit tickets before the bell rings. No time constraints this time.

**Closure** | Students write on a piece of paper one new thing they learned today, and one thing they liked about the lesson. | | |

Furthermore, I obtained two 30-minute voice recordings during the course of the writing activities. This instrument provides more insight about the new dynamics of the class, and complements the results obtained from the observation notes. During the post stage, I recorded a number of 21 interactions with 11 representatives from the 11 different groups; on a 45-student class, this is only the 24.4% of the class. Additionally, all interactions between students and teacher had as an objective the negotiation of lexical items, which were later explained by the
group representatives to the rest of the group members. It is also evident in the recordings that the classroom environment overall was quite positive: There were no interruptions during interactions, and representative students patiently waited to ask their questions. Nonetheless, while listening to the audio I noticed that neither of the representatives followed the instruction of collecting three or four questions and then bring them to me; contrarily, they approached me or raised their hands only to negotiate one or two lexical items.

Notoriously, there was one moment in one of the recordings that reinforces the idea of collaboration between classmates, which, as I had pointed out in previous sections, was unusual in this class. During this moment, one of the representative students received help from another representative while answering one of her questions. Both students had been appointed representatives for different groups; therefore, they had no responsibility of helping each other. Figure 3 portrays this particular interaction. To see full transcription of voice recordings, please check Appendix C.

Student4: Teacher, how can I say “poseída” in English?
Student5: Possessed?
Teacher: Yes, possessed.

In opposition to the notes taken prior to the execution of the action plan, observation notes taken during and after the intervention are characterized for presenting more stability throughout the course of the lesson. Said stability applies to both time management and the improvements of the affective factor within the classroom. For instance, none of the activities before and after the writing tasks were cancelled, and, as a matter of fact, notes highlight the fact that all activities were completed before recess. Voice recordings complementary to the observation notes provide more insight about the nature of the classroom interactions, and how
planning group activities, which led my learners to work towards the same goal, is crucial to enhance the relationships within the classroom and to increase the number of interactions among students.

**Interview with Host Teacher.** Lastly, the fourth data collection instrument was a semi-structured interview with my host English teacher. The main objective of this interview was to obtain an outside perspective about the improvements of my teaching methodologies.

The first question was related to the identification of the steps of my action: Could you please explain the steps that I followed in my intervention? The host teacher was able to identify all of them without previous information, which proves clarity and precision in the design and implementation of the plan.

The next two questions were related to the efficiency and efficacy of my intervention, and how this enriched my teaching practice: Do you consider that this intervention was enough to enhance that specific aspect of my teaching methodology? And why? Her answer was that “Yes, I consider the pictures and the words were enough, clear for the students, in order they could use them in their writing, and apart from that, the activity was really interesting for the students” (L. Scaramelli, personal communication, December 3, 2015). Even though she did not directly refer to my methodology per se, she connected her answer to how this action plan was designed with the necessary considerations, which was, according to her, reflected on the fact that students engaged with the lesson.

Likewise, the aim of the following question was to obtain information about the usefulness of the action plan; she considered that indeed it was helpful “because the students could understand and use all these words easily in their task and they were really concentrated on them” (L. Scaramelli, personal communication, December 3, 2015). This corroborates the idea that exposing students to more precise vocabulary can help them express themselves with more
accuracy in their writing, and also to stay on task, which is pivotal to enhance time management skills.

Finally, the fourth question had the objective of analyzing the improvements that this action plan could have. Her answer was that “maybe you could give them a role, to all the students in the group. For example, one of the students could have been in charge of the new vocabulary; other could use the grammar, etcetera” (L. Scaramelli, personal communication, December 3, 2015). The answer provided by the host teacher directly tackles the issue of democracy which I referred to in previous sections; according to her, assigning more roles to other students could improve this intervention since it would offer a wider range of roles that students could have within their groups. Assigning more roles could also maintain more students on task, which would positively impact on time management as well.

In a nutshell, the titular English teacher of this class considers that this intervention was successful overall, mainly because of the clarity of the design and implementation, and due to the fact that it led students to behave in a more cooperative manner. Nonetheless, there is one aspect that she considers should be improved, which is the appointment of different roles to each student.

Full interview can be found in Appendix D.
Reflection and Analysis of Intervention

The following section is a thoughtful and insightful reflection of the results obtained from the collection of data. First and foremost, it is essential to state that interventions resulted in positive outcomes, and that the research question “What strategies can I use to efficiently answer students’ lexical questions during the writing activities of my lessons?” was successfully answered. Moreover, the success of the intervention is connected to the achievement of several pedagogical elements previously presented in the theoretical framework, such as the improvement of time management skills, the development of a more democratic teaching practice, the improvement of affective factors within the classroom, and the outcomes of offering more language input to students. All these elements are embedded in and connected to the concept of group work, and the reflection will be fully connected to this concept since it was the driving force of the action plan. In the next paragraphs, I will reflect about the improvement of these elements based on the data collected before, during, and after the implementation of the action plan, to later focus on the improvement of the action plan, and the aspects that need to be changed and kept to expand my teaching methodologies.

In first place, the data obtained from the instruments demonstrated that I improved my time management skills. This is mainly reflected on the successful delivery of all the stages drafted in the lesson plans, and ultimately the achievement of the learning objective proposed for each lesson. Contrastively, in the data collected prior to the intervention, many activities had to be cancelled so as to have enough time during the productive stage. In order to enhance time management with my class, I decided to delegate responsibilities to my students, and this not only secured my time considerations, but also my students’; attributing learners the opportunity to be in charge of their learning process led them to wisely use their time as well. For instance, the fact that one student was in charge of gathering and negotiating questions with the teacher,
somehow encouraged students to come to agreements, come up with different ideas, and suggest strategies among themselves in order to complete the writing tasks on a timely manner, and more efficiently.

Secondly, I consider that I successfully achieved certain aspects related to democracy in my class. The data revealed that grouping students, and also grouping their doubts, helped me reach a larger number of them, and that I could answer more questions in less time, taking into account the learning needs of the whole class. Nonetheless, there is one specific aspect related to democracy that was considerably hindered by the action plan: The fact that only one student per group had a specific duty. This part of the intervention need urgent revision before implementing the action plan again, and suggestions to improve the assignation of roles will be addressed later in this sections.

The third important aspect improved by the action plan is the affective factor embedded in the classroom. Before designing the intervention, I had not considered this aspect as a crucial element of my research, since I had not linked it to the other components of my investigation. Nonetheless, after gathering and analyzing the data, I noticed that there were considerable differences before and after implementing the action plan. For instance, pre-intervention lessons were straightforwardly characterized by negative feelings from both the teacher and the students; at the end of those lessons, I noticed that students felt unengaged and reluctant, and I felt mostly frustrated and demotivated. Additionally, students usually behaved more disruptively during the writing tasks, they interrupted each other while asking questions to the teacher, and they did not have any method to organize themselves. From the data that I collected, I realized that the implementation of group work was extremely helpful to maintain a more organized classwork setting, and students behaved more calmly and organized themselves before approaching me to ask their questions. This last aspect is closely related to the previously discussed concept of
democracy: After intervening this class, not only I as a teacher developed a more democratic stance, but also students. Furthermore, I noticed students tended to be more helpful towards each other, and that they considered and understood group work as a chance to enhance everybody’s learning process. This was reflected in the increase of student-student interactions, and more specifically, the moment in which students from different groups helped each other.

Notwithstanding, even though I believe one student-student interaction recorded is not enough evidence to support this point, I consider it to be a clear register of progression within my classroom.

In fourth place, the last improvement resulted from this investigation was the awareness raised regarding the importance of offering more language input to the group of learners. As I explained in previous sections, one aspect of my action plan was to project a pool of useful lexical items that students could use to complement their writings. As I stated in the problem, I considered that students overall lacked of enough English vocabulary, which had repercussions in both their writing assignments, and the use of time during the productive stage. For those reasons, I showed learners this pool of words as an anticipation of questions that students might have come up with. The usage of these words was successful, and it reflected in their writing assignments; nonetheless, there is a specific aspect to be improved in this section as well, which is the fact that these pools of words should have been complemented by adding the lexical categories that corresponded to each lexical item. Suggestions to improve this aspect will be further discussed as well.

In conclusion, the design and implementation of my action plan resulted to be extremely positive. The class was appropriately intervened, and the methods to collect data from were coherent with the research and the question. However, there are two specific aspects that need to be pointed out, and that need careful and critical revision before continuing the action research
cycle. This first one of these aspects is related to the assignation of roles within each group. As my host teacher remarked, the democratic aspect I was expecting to accomplish was slightly hindered by the fact that only one student has a prominent role in each group. This might have led the other students to either feel unimportant in their groups, or with no task to complete. For those reasons, before implementing this action plan again, I would like to draft and designate different roles to each group participant, such as the group representative (role drafted for this research), the editor, the time keeper, and so on and so forth. In order to make the role appointment stage even more democratic, I would write the roles down on cards and let students randomly select them.

The second aspect that requires consideration and improvement is the pool of words. In order to offer more substantial language input to my students, I should have projected the lexical items with the lexical categories (noun, verb, adjective, adverb, and so on) each of them corresponded to. For instance, instead of simply projecting the words “macabre” and “terrifying,” I should have included the category “adjective” in parentheses next to the lexical items, enabling students to identify, categorize, and properly include these words in their writings tasks. Additionally, I believe I could have assessed the usefulness of the pool of words by collecting data with a different instrument, such as assessments. This would have offered me more feedback regarding the successfulness of this aspect of my intervention.

In a nutshell, I believe there is no reason not to implement this action plan again. As I previously stated, the intervention and the methods to collect data were appropriate and coherent to the research. Nonetheless, there exist two central aspects that need careful revision before implanting it again: democracy through the appointment of roles, and the usage of the pool of words. However, it is necessary to mention that neither of these aspects were detrimental to the development of this action research overall, and that the research question was successfully
answered in spite of the emergence of new issues to be addressed. I, as a teacher-researcher, nonetheless, positively receive and acknowledge these issues, since they open doors to further explore in future action researches.
Conclusion and Implications

This Action Research Project was carried out in 2015 with a very clear objective: To develop strategies that could help me answer my students’ lexical questions during the course of the writing activities in a large, multilevel 9th grade. Throughout the process of finding an answer, I put myself on the position of questioning and reflecting on my own teaching practice. This task, therefore, led me to become a more reflective professional, and to understand my critical thinking skills as a pivotal element to make changes in my English classroom. The following section is a reflective account of this project in which I will explain the implications that it had for my present and future teaching practice, the modifications that the research drove me to implement in my practice, the limitations I encountered while delivering this project, and suggestions for future researches that complement and expand the present Action Research Project.

The first implication that this investigation had in my practice is that it reinforced the idea that studying, questioning, and investigating my own practice can drive me to become a stronger teacher, in the sense that it offered me new tools to enhance my own practice, and to support the teaching-learning process of my students. Throughout the course of the research, I was able to design and implement an action plan that certainly enriched the methodology of my lessons, and allowed me to explore and expand my teaching beliefs. As a future teacher and prospective researcher, I now consider this investigative style to be coherent and appropriate to the teaching practice. Due to its specific and contextualized characteristics, a research of this design can help hardworking teachers improve on their practices in an efficient and immediate fashion, which can be extensively helpful to improve our Chilean EFL context.

With regard to the implications of the action plan, the one I drafted for this research made me realize, in first place, that mostly all – if not all – elements of a classroom are intertwined,
and that modifying and improving on one of these elements can help with the enhancement of the rest. For instance, the main objective of this Action Research Project was to enhance time management skills during the feedback moments of the productive stage of my lessons; however, I noticed that my intervention involved making changes in other aspects of the class, which derived in the improvement of democracy within the classroom, and the improvement of the affective factors embedded in my class.

As a student teacher, this investigation also helped me overcome the fear of implementing group work activities, which is very common in teachers who have to deal with large classes. In the present, I believe that assigning group tasks is actually a better strategy not only to guide students to stay on task, but also to help teachers maintain the pace of the lessons, to open doors for more student-student interaction instances, and to enhance time management skills. In my opinion, one of the best opportunities teachers can offer to their students it to be in charge of their own learning, and this research is proof that by appointing students to liaise with the teacher is enormously helpful since it gives more responsibilities to the learners – which in the end makes the learning process even more meaningful – and because it is a great relief for teachers who deal with this type of classes.

Likewise, the interventions made me realize that exposing students to significant and contextualized input is crucial for them to deliver more appropriate output and with more confidence. By offering the pools of lexical items to my students, I made sure that they were exposed to enough vocabulary before producing their own texts. This served the purpose of my research since I anticipated lexical questions students might have had, which helped me budget my time during the student-teacher interactions.

Regarding my students, this project helped me to include more student-based activities, and delegating responsibilities to the group of learners brought major benefits for them as well.
After intervening this class, I observed a radical change between the behavioral attitudes students had compared to how they behaved prior to the intervention. For instance, before the implementation of the action plan students tended to be quite disorganized and messy while asking questions; they did not have a system to take turns, which enabled misbehavior as well as unnecessary disruptions. Additionally, not all students had the chance to ask their questions, thus improve their writing tasks. In contrast, post-intervention lessons were characterized by the positive attitude students had towards the activities: Students organized themselves first in their groups when appointing the representative, gathering and prioritizing ideas, and agreeing or dissenting while delivering their tasks. Then, student representatives organized themselves in order to ask their questions to me by agreeing on queuing in front of me. This had constructive repercussions within the classroom, mainly because the learning environment became more appropriate for the objective of each of the lessons.

The most prominent modification this research drove me to implement is mainly the desire and encouragement to implement more group work activities. By embracing the idea that group work can benefit both teachers and students, I now consider that team work is appropriate and ultimately a necessity in large multilevel classes. Implementing these activities certainly helped me let go of the fear of having a lesson turn into a disaster, and also enabled more student-student interactions – which is crucial for the development of a communicative approach in language teaching. Likewise, I will maintain the use of the pools of words, since I consider them extremely useful to anticipate vocabulary questions, and to offer students contextualized input which they can learn and use immediately.

Nonetheless, there were two limitations I came across while developing this action research. The first one is related to the design of the pool of words, and the second one makes reference to the decision making process behind the selection of the instruments.
On the one hand, I consider that the pools of words, despite being extremely helpful, presented some minor aspects that need urgent modification before implementing the action plan again. As explained in previous sections, the pools of words I designed only contained pictures and the lexical items I depicted, but I failed to include the lexical categories they corresponded to. Had I included those categories next to the lexical items, I probably would have saved more time during the lessons, and students would have arrived at a better understanding of the usage of these words.

On the other hand, I believe the selection of instruments was not ultimately the best. Even though journals, observation notes, voice recordings, and the interview with the host teacher offered enough information to answer my research question, there were other teaching-learning aspects of high importance that were not fully included in the data I collected. For instance, the increase of student-student interactions could have been proved through video recordings, or collecting different assessment could have been an instrument to corroborate the usefulness of the pools of words. Nonetheless, those two aspects were not part of my research question per se, but the inclusion of them would have definitely made mine a stronger case.

In the future, I believe I will attempt to investigate other topics related to the writing process. In my personal opinion, writing is the most difficult skill to develop, therefore the most challenging one. For that reason, and for personal interests, I think I will continue to work on the same action research cycle but raising a question that emerges from another problematic. The second topic I would like to expand on is democracy; since this concept should apply to both teachers and students, I find it interesting to analyze how certain teacher’s attitudes can affect the learning process, as well as the attitudes that students develop when exposed to the right democratic model. The following is a list of suggested possible research questions, all of them
connected to the improvement of the two topics mentioned above, and that complement and continue to examine the topics that are embedded in this Action Research Project:

- What types of assessments can I use to assess group writing?
- What method can I implement to teach writing in large multilevel classes?
- How can I assess the usefulness of the pools of words?
- What strategies can I develop to guide my students to become more democratic among them?

To sum up, I must restate that there is no reason not to implement this research cycle again. Considering that the interventions resulted in positive outcomes, I find this research to be useful for English teachers in Spanish contexts that must deal with large heterogeneous classes, and who wish to implement a communicative approach. However, there are specific changes that need to be made before implementing it again, or before expanding on the topic in other researches.
References


ANSWERING QUESTIONS DURING WRITING ACTIVITIES


Appendix

Appendix A *Pre and Post Intervention Materials*

Appendix 1. *Lesson plan template*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>LESSON STEPS</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>RESOURCES</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Pre</td>
<td>Present Motivate Activate Engage</td>
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<td>2. While</td>
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<td>3. Post</td>
<td>Productive skills Lang. awareness Practice Function</td>
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<td>Closure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2. *Interview with host teacher*

**Guiding Questions for Interview with Host Teacher**

1. Could you please explain the steps that he followed in his intervention?
2. Do you consider this intervention was enough to enhance that specific aspect of the student-teacher’s teaching methodology? Why?
3. Do you believe the intervention the student-teacher planned was helpful for the students?
4. What do you think should be done to improve this intervention?
Appendix 3. *Pool of words implemented in lesson 1*

**Useful Words!**
- Apologize
- To hold hands
- Leaves turned brown
- Under the light of the stars
- Spend time with (friends/family/boyfriend/girlfriend)
- Reject
- Stay up through the night

Appendix 4. *Pool of words implemented in lesson 2*

**Useful vocabulary**
- Frightened
- Ghosts/Spirits
- Demon
- Haunted by a ghost
- Terrifying
- Macabre
- Creepy
- Apparition
- Scary
- Possessed
- Disgusting/Disgusted
- Yell/Scream
- Bat/Spider/Bugs
- Haunted house
- Coven (group of witches)
## Appendix B Lesson Plans

### Lesson Plan September 21st – pre-intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>LESSON STEPS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will be able to write a narrative story.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Pre</strong> Present Motivate Activate Engage</td>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>Students play individually</td>
<td>1’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Hangman (Memorable experiences)</td>
<td>On student is selected randomly</td>
<td>5’</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elicitation of date and weather</td>
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<td>1’</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary activity:</strong> Students match the picture with the correct word. (Coast, shouting, waving, unconscious)</td>
<td>Students go to the board and match.</td>
<td>4’</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>With the words from the previous activity, students guess what is going to happen in the text.</td>
<td>Teacher writes answers down on the board (next to the students’ names)</td>
<td>3’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. <strong>While</strong> Comprehension</td>
<td><strong>Reading activity</strong></td>
<td>Predictions are checked on the board</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>I checked the time and I think I will have to leave out one of the reading activities. I decide I can eliminate R2 without affecting the learning objective. I eliminate R2 or I won’t have enough time to complete the writing task on time. Reading activities work smoothly. Even though some students mention they don’t like the text, they still work. I think they like working in pairs, but some of them prefer working individually, especially those with a higher proficiency level.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>R1: students read the text to check predictions</td>
<td>Students are picked randomly to answer.</td>
<td>5’</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>R2: students answer question nº1</td>
<td>Students answer aloud.</td>
<td>2’</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T asks: how many paragraphs are there in the text? (one) According to what we have studied, how many paragraphs should the text have? (3/4)</td>
<td></td>
<td>10’</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R3: Comprehension questions</td>
<td>Students answer in pairs, and then share with whole class.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Lesson Plan November 25th – post-intervention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIVE</th>
<th>LESSON STEPS</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>OBSERVATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students can answer reading comprehension questions about a horror story, and use that story as a model to create their own.</td>
<td>1. <strong>Pre</strong></td>
<td>Greetings</td>
<td>Whole class.</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>Students greet, put on their aprons and sit down. Students play hangman, and elicitation of date and weather is smooth and without interruptions.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Present</td>
<td>Hangman (Storytelling)</td>
<td>Students play individually.</td>
<td>5’</td>
<td>Activity works very well. Lots of volunteers want to do the matching activity. Volunteers ask me if they’re correct (the vocabulary is a bit more complex than the one presented in previous sessions).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivate</td>
<td>Elicitation of date and weather</td>
<td>Randomly pick a student.</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td>I’ve noticed students like predicting, and most of all, being right. I should find a way to motivate more students into this</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Activate</td>
<td><strong>Vocabulary activity</strong></td>
<td>Students match pictures and vocab. items on the board, and they select the next student to go to the</td>
<td>8’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Engage</td>
<td>Students match the picture with the corresponding vocabulary item.</td>
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<td>Students predict the topic of the lesson through the pictures.</td>
<td>Predictions are written down on the board.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. While Comprehension</strong></td>
<td><strong>Reading Activity</strong></td>
<td><strong>Predictions are checked on the board</strong></td>
<td>2’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading 1: Checking for predictions.</td>
<td>Students do activity in pairs, and then they randomly answer the questions as a group.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading 2: comprehension questions and language awareness. Students answer the following questions in pairs.</td>
<td>Answers to questions are written on the whiteboard by the teacher.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1. What did the face of the “ghost” look like?</td>
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<td>2. What was the man doing when he saw the ghost?</td>
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<td>3. Who was inside the house?</td>
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<td>4. What was the wife doing?</td>
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<td>5. What verbs are in past tense in the story?</td>
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<td><strong>3. Post Productive skills Lang. awareness Practice Function</strong></td>
<td><strong>Writing activity</strong></td>
<td>Students get together in their groups immediately. They agree to keep the same group representatives they appointed the previous lesson. Brainstorm activity requires a bit more of time. I monitor groups while they brainstorm and help them organize their ideas. Representatives make a line in front of me to ask questions, and wait for their turns while their other classmates continue working on the task. While monitoring, I also receive a couple of questions; students want to know if the way they are trying to include the vocabulary from the pool of words is correct. I help them with that, since it was only a helping device, I didn’t preteach this vocabulary. Maybe I should give a little explanation about these words before just presenting them, or maybe add the lexical category they correspond to.</td>
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<td>Students appoint one representative to ask questions to the teacher.</td>
<td>Brainstorm is in group.</td>
<td>5’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students brainstorm about a horror story.</td>
<td>Students give feedback to each other. Teacher provides representative s with answers to their questions.</td>
<td>5’</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher reminds the structure of the story and outline it. Paragraph 1 – Introduction</td>
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<td>Paragraph 2 – Body</td>
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<td>Paragraph 3 – Conclusion</td>
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<td>Teacher projects pool of useful vocabulary to</td>
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<td>Students write the story.</td>
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<td><strong>Closure</strong></td>
<td>Students write in a piece of paper two new things they learned today.</td>
<td>Students finish activity on time, and have a couple of minutes left to write their exit tickets.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C Voice Recordings

November 24th
Student1: ¿Cómo digo que “con suerte tenía amigos” sin sonar despectivo?
Teacher: Can you ask in English?
Student1: How can I say “casi no tenía amigos”?
Teacher: “I almost didn’t have friends. I didn’t have any friend. I was friendless.”
Student1: Ya, lo voy a intentar.
Student2: How can I say “una joven pareja”?
Teacher: “A young couple.”
Student2: “Se encuentra en medio de una ruptura.”
Teacher: “Is in the middle of a break up.”
Student3: How can I say “me caí”?
Teacher: “I fell.”
Student4: How can I say, uhm, “que por una infidelidad”?
Teacher: ¿“Por una infidelidad”? ¿“Por una”?
Student4: Yes.
Teacher: “Because of an infidelity.”
Student5: How can I say “un baile formal” in English?
Teacher: Baile formal? A “ball.”
Student5: And “aceptó”?
Teacher: “Accepted.”
Student5: Y... And... “le propuso.”
Teacher: Le propuso... ¿quién?
Student5: He “le propuso a ella.”
Teacher: “He proposed something to her”
Student 3: How can I say “comenzamos”?
Teacher: “We began.” ¿Comenzamos qué cosa?
Student3: Eh, a hablar.
Teacher: “We started to speak.”
Student3: Start?
Teacher: Started to speak.
Student1: How can I say “que se arregló para salir”?
Teacher: ¿Él o ella?
Student1: Él.
Teacher: “He arranged himself.”
Student6: ¿Cómo se dice “noviazgo”?
Teacher: In English?
Student6: How can I say “noviazgo” in English?
Teacher: Commitment. Double m. Commitment.
Student7: Profe, ¿cómo se dice “ambos”?
Teacher: Both. B-O-T-H.
Student7: And “ambos iban caminando”?
Teacher: “Both of them were walking.”
Student6: How can I say “mirador”?
Teacher: “Overlook.”
Student6: How can I say “se pusieron a hablar”?
Teacher: “They started talking.”
Student6: Started… con -ed, ¿cierto?
Teacher: Sí.
Student8: Teacher! How can I say “ex novios” in English?
Teacher: “An ex couple.”
Student9: ¿Está bien eso?
Teacher: ¿Qué cosa?
Student9: Lo que llevamos
Teacher: (Checking and correcting students’ draft) AN infidelity… FROM him… period, not comma… because OF an infidelity from him, THEY decided to take different ways.
Student9: ¿Entonces ahí cómo va?
Teacher: Period.
Student1: How can I say “que se armó de valor para hacer algo”?
Teacher: “He encouraged himself.”
Student4: Is it “they don’t want to finish,” or “finished”?
Teacher: TO finish.
Student4: “Didn’t want”, cierto?… or “don’t want”?
Teacher: They didn’t.
Student9: Sus miradas lo dijeron todo?
Teacher: (Checking draft and giving feedback) Their looks said everything. Aquí arriba estoy un poco complicado. He came walking to where SHE was, AND THEN…
Student9: Y ahí lo cambio.
Teacher: Both of them followed THEIR WAYS, but their looks said everything.
Student9: Entonces sería… to where she was… and…
Teacher: Both of them.
Student9: Both? Así?
Student1: Profe, si quiero decir que es una relación que ya no dió para más, la gota que rebalsó el vaso, ¿cómo puedo decir eso?
Teacher: ¿Pero me puede decir UN concepto?
Student1: Como que llegó al máximo, llegó al limite.
Teacher: “To reach something’s limit”
Student1: (Student shows draft to explain something) Como… one day, algo… the limit of the situation?
Teacher: ¿Cómo?
Student1: The limit of the situation… puede ser?
Teacher: TO REACH the limit of the situation.
Student1: Reach. (and writes down)
Student7: ¡Profe Seba! Profe, Profe! Mister! ¿Cómo podríamos decir “al pasar todo el verano juntos?” ¿Cómo es “al pasar”?
Teacher: After spending the whole summer together.
Student7: ¿“El amor se hizo más profundo” cómo lo podríamos decir? The love… eh… cómo se dice profundo?
Teacher: Deep.
Student7: Deep?
Teacher: Si “deep” es profundo, cómo sería “más profundo”?
Student7: ¿Cómo es profundo?
Teacher: Deep.
Student7: Con –st, o no?
Teacher: Por ahí, por ahí.
Student7: -En. –Er. Deeper.
Teacher: Yes. Their love became deeper.
Student3: How can I say “y me enamoré”?
Teacher: “I fell in love.”
Student6: In the end is IN the end, y “continuará” es “to be continued”? con –ed? Continued?
Teacher: Yes, that’s it?
Student6: Yes, thanks.
Student10: Profesor, ¿Cómo se dice “estrella fugaz”?
Teacher: In English?
Student10: Sí.
Teacher: Can you ask in English?
Student10: How do you say “estrella fugaz”?
Teacher: Shooting star.
Student1: (While teacher checks her group’s draft) Usted sabe que yo me equivoco poh, profe.
Teacher: Errores pequeños.
Student1: Pero me equivoco, poh.
Teacher: THERE was a girl WHO was so sad… no, who was sad because she felt trapped and alone… ah, ya, because she felt trapped and she was alone. At the same time, there was a boy who was in a difficult situation. Destiny wanted TO PUT them TOGETHER. THEY LOOKED at the starts and were happy.

November 25th
Student1: How can I say… uhm… como referirme a iniciar una historia pero de un tiempo inespecifico, así como “en algún momento,” o “hace un par de años,” no sé.
Teacher: “Once upon a time in an unspecified… time.”
Student1: Or… a couple years ago?
Teacher: Yes.
Student1: Ok.
Student2: Teacher, what is entity?
Teacher: Entity?
Student2: Debería saber…
Teacher: ¿A qué palabra se parece en Español?
Student2: Entity…
Teacher: An entity is a ghost, or a spirit, or a demon.
Student2: Pero en Español, ¿qué está hablando?
Student3: Profe, tengo una duda. ¿Horror es más como de sangre y cosas así, cierto?
Teacher: No, it can be related to ghosts.
Student3: Fantasmas puede ser... ¿y también puede haber sangre?
Teacher: Yeah.
Student4: Es que vamos a hacer una historia de una niña de 6 años que se aparecía en el bosque y es poseída por un demonio. Y después pasan muchos años, muchos años, muchos años, y un policía la encuentra en el bosque, y le pregunta por los papas y todo eso, y ella lo mata a él, pero hay que buscar la forma. Bien sangriento.
Student5: Mysteriously disappear... ¿está bien así?
Teacher: ¿En qué tiempo está eso?
Student5: ¿En pasado?
Teacher: ¿En pasado? Ese no es el pasado de “disappear.”
Student5: ¿Con -ed?
Teacher: Y es.
Student1: Teacher, if I want to say “se acercó o me acerqué a la ventana,” puedo decir “to get close to the window”? 
Teacher: Yes
Student6: Entre ellos... “Between” es entre... entre ellos se encontraba.
Teacher: ¿Entre ellos? Ah, “among them”
Student6: ¿Y cómo digo “entre ellos se encontraba”?
Teacher: (After checking draft) Ah, she was among them.
Student4: Teacher, how can I say “poseida” in English?
Teacher: Possessed?
Student5: Mysteriously disappear... ¿está bien así?
Teacher: ¿En qué tiempo está eso?
Student5: ¿En pasado?
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Teacher: Yes.

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Teacher: Yes.

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Teacher: Possessed?
Student5: Mysteriously disappear... ¿está bien así?
Teacher: ¿En qué tiempo está eso?
Student5: ¿En pasado?
Teacher: ¿En pasado? Ese no es el pasado de “disappear.”
Student5: ¿Con -ed?
Teacher: Yes.
Student10: ¿Y eso estaría bien? Porque mire… había una vez… eh, no. En un…
Teacher: How many friends?
Student10: Three.
Teacher: Entonces, there were three friends inside a haunted house.
Student10: Inside?
Teacher: Yes.
Student10: Es que pusimos eso. Porque querían sentir miedo.
Teacher: Because they wanted.
Student10: They wanted… ¿Por qué -ted?
Teacher: Because it’s in the past. They wanted to feel scared.
Student10: Ah, wanted to feel? Así, ¿cierto?
Teacher: To feel, not felt.
Student10: To feel scary.
Teacher: No. To feel SCARED. On Halloween night.
Student6: Profe, ¿me lo puede revisar?
Teacher: (Reading draft) the cemetery. IT was.
Student6: Ya, es que la duda que tengo es si eso está bien.
Teacher: (Correcting draft) and began to. Es BEGAN. Sin –d.
Student6: Profe, ¿cómo se dice comenzó? How can I say comenzó in English?
Teacher: It began, or it started.
Student4: How can I say refuerzo?
Teacher: Reinforcement. ¿refuerzo de qué tipo?
Student4: Refuerzo como del policía que…
Teacher: R-E-I-N-F-O-R-C-E-M-E-N-T.
Student8: How can I say “ella se demayó”?
Teacher: She fainted.
Appendix D Interview with Host Teacher

INTERVIEWER: Miss Lorena, could you please explain the steps that I followed in my intervention?

PARTICIPANT: Of course. Well, the first step was to join the students in groups, then they had to choose a representative for the group, after that, you projected the power (point) with the useful words and some images; the next step was that the students had to understand that they could use the words in their writing, and the last step was that the students… one of the students had to collect the questions and give them to you.

I: Yes, exactly. Do you consider that this intervention was enough to enhance that specific aspect of my teaching methodology? And why?

P: Yes, I consider the pictures and the words were enough, clear for the students, in order they could use them in their writing, and apart from that, the activity was really interesting for the students.

I: Do you believe that the intervention that I planned was helpful for the students?

P: Yes, very helpful, because the students could understand and use all these words easily in their task, and they were really concentrated on them.

I: Ok. And what do you think I should do to improve this intervention?

P: Well, to improve the intervention, maybe you could give them a role, to all the students in the group. For example, one of the students could have been in charge of the new vocabulary; other could use the grammar, etcetera.