



**Faculty of Education**

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**Self-Study Research: Exploring my vocabulary teaching strategies to scaffold reading  
comprehension skills.**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Seminar and English  
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*“If you can take it, you can make it” - Louis Zamperini*  
*“Be the change you want to see in the world” - Mahatma Gandhi*

### **Acknowledgments**

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### **Abstract**

The present self-study explored the teaching strategies when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills of 10-th grade students in the EFL classroom, as well as to argue for a strong relationship between vocabulary and the development of reading comprehension skills. The research approach used to develop this self-study was following a qualitative type of analysis due to the nature of the study itself, which is to explore the types of teaching strategies implemented. Classroom observations and a questionnaire were implemented within a month in a 10th-grade classroom. Lesson plannings from the final practicum were used as artifact analysis documents. The data gathered through these tools revealed that specific strategies such as the use of imagery and pre-reading strategies are used to teach vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills of 10th-grade students. It further showed the strong influence that vocabulary pre-teaching has on supporting the reading comprehension process. Besides, secondary findings evinced that even though these strategies had positive outcomes it can be meaningful to implement others such as the use of music and movies to present vocabulary and to support the reading process. Finally, this self-study provides the opportunity to learn about the challenges that teaching vocabulary might have and also its relation to reading comprehension development.

**Keywords:** *vocabulary, vocabulary knowledge, pre-reading strategies, reading comprehension.*

## Resumen

El presente auto-estudio exploró las estrategias de enseñanza de vocabulario para apoyar las habilidades de comprensión lectora de estudiantes de 10º grado en el aula de EFL, así como para argumentar una fuerte relación entre el vocabulario y el desarrollo de habilidades de comprensión lectora. Esta investigación de autoestudio se propuso investigar mis estrategias al enseñar vocabulario para andamiar las habilidades de comprensión lectora en un aula de inglés como lengua extranjera (EFL) en Chile. El enfoque de investigación utilizado para desarrollar este autoestudio fue siguiendo un tipo de análisis cualitativo debido a la naturaleza misma del estudio, la cual es abordar los tipos de estrategias de enseñanza. Se implementaron dos observaciones de clases y un cuestionario en el lapso de un mes en una sala de clases de 10º grado. Como documentos de análisis de artefactos se utilizaron cuatro planificaciones de la práctica final. Los datos recogidos a través de estas herramientas revelaron que se utilizan estrategias específicas, como el uso de imágenes y estrategias de prelectura, para enseñar vocabulario con el fin de reforzar las destrezas de comprensión lectora de los alumnos de 10º curso. También demostró la gran influencia que tiene la enseñanza previa del vocabulario en el proceso de comprensión lectora. Además, los hallazgos secundarios evidenciaron que, aunque estas estrategias tuvieron resultados positivos, puede ser significativo implementar otras como el uso de música y películas para presentar vocabulario y apoyar el proceso de lectura. Por último, este autoestudio ofrece la oportunidad de conocer los retos que puede plantear la enseñanza del vocabulario y su relación con el desarrollo de la comprensión lectora.

**Palabras clave:** *vocabulario, conocimiento del vocabulario, estrategias previas a la lectura, comprensión lectora.*

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## **I. Introduction**

The following self-study was expected to explore my teaching practices within my practicum context by considering my previous experiences as an English pre-service teacher in Chile. This study aimed to address and explore how I use different strategies to teach vocabulary to scaffold the development of reading comprehension skills. Therefore, this study seeks to offer valuable insights into the teaching of vocabulary setting and provide evidence to nurture my teaching persona and practice. Besides, in order to understand the rationale behind this study, it is important to consider my previous experiences as a pre-service teacher and my current praxis when teaching vocabulary to students. These registers allowed me to provide a more enriching framework for the development of this study to answer my research question.

### **a. Context**

In 2021, I had my first experience as an English pre-service teacher of a 5th-grade at a public school in San Miguel. In this setting, I observed how the teacher taught vocabulary to the students by presenting isolated words and then translating them into Spanish. The above portrayed the lack of strategies to teach vocabulary for students to learn receptively and productively in English. In fact, it was noticed a lack of variety of strategies used to teach vocabulary such as the use of visual aids, providing a context to understand the use of the words, and the use of pre-reading strategies, among several others. I could also observe the challenges that students faced when reading different types of texts, which led them to constantly asking about the meaning of words. Hence, students were not prepared to read without repeatedly asking for the meaning of some words. As a consequence, answering and explaining each word to students created a difficult development of the lesson and it hindered the students' reading

comprehension process. Hence, these observations aroused my interest and eagerness to investigate how to teach vocabulary in English for students to use it receptively and productively.

The school in which this study was developed is a subsidized school located in La Florida, Santiago, Chile, which has an intermediate socio-economic background, according to MIME (2022). It is further characterized by its bilingual teaching program and academic excellence. Regarding each class, most courses have around forty-five students and one teacher of each subject leading the class. Furthermore, regarding English lessons, it was observed that all classes are developed using a textbook, the instructions are delivered in English, and most of the students are able to use the language for communicative purposes. They read different types of texts from the textbook, and they were also able to answer reading comprehension questions in written and oral form. For instance, the class I was in was a 10th grade, composed of forty-five students that were able to follow oral instructions in English, read different types of texts, write short paragraphs about different topics, or produce short speaking tasks. My duties with this class included planning and designing all the lessons to accomplish the development of receptive and productive skills when learning a foreign language.

During the observation period at the beginning of this practicum, I noticed that in most of the classes, the teacher did not teach vocabulary at any stage of the lesson. In consequence, some students struggled with understanding the new vocabulary they were supposed to use during the following activities of the lessons. It is essential to consider that vocabulary plays a vital role in mastering the four language skills, and that it is one of the main elements of developing language proficiency and reading comprehension skills (Mineduc, 2015; Richards & Rodgers, 2001).

The impressions I got during my observations were confirmed when I implemented my first lessons in the final practicum. I noticed that several students struggled with words when reading different types of texts from the textbook used to develop the lesson. In addition, the high number of students in the class made it difficult for me to individually explain the meaning of the words in order for them to concentrate and comprehend their readings. This situation disturbed my lesson as well as limited the learning and reading comprehension process of students. Therefore, I decided to change the class modality and implemented my teaching vocabulary strategies. For instance, in some classes, I pre-taught vocabulary before students read a text, and I noticed that students seemed to understand and comprehend what they were reading due to this scaffolding process. In fact, Nunan (2003) states that reading skill involves that the reader have to develop metacognitive strategies in order to construct meaning of the printed words. Likewise, Quinn et al. (2015) claim that “vocabulary knowledge is one of the best predictors of reading comprehension” (p.2). Thus, declaring that vocabulary is essential to cope with reading comprehension development and improvement.

Reflecting on the aforementioned situations, it motivated me to investigate and explore what teaching vocabulary strategies can support students reading comprehension development. Besides, it was crucial for me to explore in depth the relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension and what strategies are suitable and pertinent to ensure a quality learning process for students when learning a foreign language.

#### **b. Nature of the research**

Vocabulary is a pivotal element in the development of any language (González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017). According to MINEDUC (2015), vocabulary within the EFL Chilean classroom is necessary to achieve a communicative competence that the Ministry seeks

to accomplish according to Bases Curriculares. Moreover, vocabulary is an essential element, such as grammar, pronunciation, and phonetics (p.217) that acts as a basis to improve how learners speak, write, read and listen in a foreign language. For this reason, EFL teachers must know how to integrate vocabulary for students to use it receptively and productively in different contexts in order to develop comprehension and communication. Furthermore, teachers must integrate vocabulary according to thematic units and students' context and background to create a meaningful and connected experience with the foreign language through the use of several resources such as different types of texts that allow students to reflect, think and connect with their prior knowledge and experiences thus developing reading comprehension. Finally, English teachers must foster opportunities to integrate vocabulary as a crucial element for students to master English language proficiency by considering their four skills: reading, listening, speaking, and writing.

### **c. Rationale of the research**

There are two main reasons behind exploring my area of interest to answer my research question. First, the observations that I made to the English teacher in my current teaching practicum motivated me to inquire how vocabulary is taught in this EFL classroom and how I can improve it to develop the student's reading comprehension skills. Second, it is essential to address and analyze how vocabulary is taught and used in the EFL Chilean classroom according to what MINEDUC (2015) seeks to accomplish to use English for communicative purposes. Therefore, it is also crucial for EFL teachers to understand the role that vocabulary development has when teaching a foreign language and how teachers should nurture their teaching practices and strategies to teach this aspect successfully in order for students to use it effectively for communicative purposes. Furthermore, vocabulary is a pivotal element within the EFL

classroom to master the language and its four skills: reading, listening, writing, and speaking and it was crucial for me as a future English teacher to explore and investigate the importance of vocabulary to develop the reading comprehension skills, and discover what are the most suitable strategies to teach it as well as to create an action plan that will allow me to cope with the challenges that might arise when teaching vocabulary.

## **II. Literature Review**

In this section, there are four main topics that aim to apprise and provide a framework to answer the research question of this study. These topics are *teaching vocabulary in an EFL context, considerations and strategies to teach vocabulary, and scaffolding reading comprehension skills*. In this regard, the following topics have practical relevance to support this study and will guide the literature review section of this paper:

### **a. *Teaching vocabulary in the EFL context.***

As González-Fernández and Schmitt (2017) claim, vocabulary is an essential element of any language and a critical part of second language acquisition. Thus, vocabulary is crucial to developing general language proficiency in its four skills. Furthermore, Wilkins (1972) claims that "while without grammar very little can be conveyed, without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed" (p.110). Additionally, Nation (2001) states that vocabulary learning is incremental by nature, meaning that for students to master the vocabulary, they must first encounter different types of word knowledge in its written or oral forms, phonemes, graphemes, etc. He states that the process of learning a word entails numerous encounters and repetitions. Similarly, Schmitt (2005) asserts that the more the student enhances or encounters a word, the greater the probability of retaining its meaning or knowledge. Hence, allowing them to improve their vocabulary repertoire in order to use it receptively and productively in the foreign language.

Subsequently, another factor that is present when learning vocabulary is how learners know a word. According to Nation (2006), a word is learned when considering its meaning, form, and use. Similarly, Thornbury (2002) states that a word is learned when the student has the ability to recognize it in its written or oral form, knows different meanings, and knows its part of speech. Correspondingly, Taylor (1990) argues that knowing a word entails a more complex process, such as knowing the literal meaning, its spelling, pronunciation, use in context, collocations, and syntactic constructions, as well as semantic aspects such as antonyms, synonyms, and homonyms that students should be able to understand in order to successfully learn and use a word. Despite the authors differ in the process of how to learn a word, they all agreed that learning vocabulary entails a complex and large process.

Some researchers in the vocabulary field, such as Nation (2006) and Schmitt (2005), indicate intentional vocabulary learning as the most effective approach to teaching/learning vocabulary. Their results reveal that the most direct exposure, attention, or time spent on lexical items facilitates learning (Schmitt, 2008, as cited in González-Fernández & Schmitt, 2017). In contrast, González-Fernández & Schmitt (2017) indicated that “vocabulary items were thought to be acquired incidentally by exposure, without the need of explicit instruction” (p.281). Considering that vocabulary can be acquired both intentionally or incidentally, it would be helpful for teachers to provide opportunities for students' exposure to vocabulary through activities out of the classroom, such as extensive reading or viewing, that will support and strengthen the vocabulary acquisition process of students. Likewise, Schmitt (2005) proposes that vocabulary could either be learned explicitly or incidentally. He argues that expanding rehearsal is the most effective way to support the review of a partially known vocabulary (p.138).

Finally, some factors that affect the vocabulary acquisition of non-native speakers are caused by insufficient input, limited time within the class, lack of opportunities to use the vocabulary in or outside the classroom, or some methods to teach vocabulary, such as the grammar-translation method (Siyanova-Chanturria & Webb, 2016). Given the above, it will be helpful for teachers to design lessons and provide suitable instances in which vocabulary acts as an essential element to be developed in order to master the language with communicative purposes.

***b. Considerations and strategies to teach vocabulary.***

Teaching vocabulary in an EFL context is challenging due to several limitations or a lack of teaching/learning strategies (Siyanova - Chanturria & Webb, 2016). In this regard, Schmitt (2005) proposes some considerations that teachers can follow to teach vocabulary: focus on the overall learning context when teaching vocabulary. Hence, suitable strategies can be adapted by considering students' proficiency and culture, their motivation and purpose when learning L2, and the nature of the task involved in acquiring vocabulary (p.183). In the first place, Campillo (1995) states that teachers must create optimal learning conditions for students to acquire knowledge of the target vocabulary. She claims that the criteria for selecting what vocabulary should be taught to students consider themes or topics, background knowledge, cultural factors, vocabulary size, exceptional attention to high-frequency words, and valuable materials aligned with those specific conditions (p.39-43). Subsequently, Palacios Martínez (1996) argues the importance of developing learning strategies or learners' training to cope with the challenging learning process. Additionally, Ghazal (2007) claims that it is essential to nurture students with learning strategies as well as to foster the use of autonomy to cope with the challenge that learning vocabulary entails. Along the same line, some experts on the topic, such as Nation

(2006), Schmitt (2005), and Nagy (2007) found that using different approaches, strategies, techniques, and exercises can improve teaching vocabulary and learning. Given, the above teacher have plenty strategies to teach students to cope with vocabulary learning as well as teaching strategies to present vocabulary. Thus, teachers should be prepared to adapt, modify or implement teaching strategies according their students's characteristics when learning a foreign language.

Furthermore, Thornbury (2002) proposes cognitive strategies or techniques that can be useful for teachers to expose students when they encounter vocabulary; such as receiving, recognizing, retaining, repetition, and pacing by using realia, pictionaries, mnemonics, drillings, gestures, flashcards, and pictures. With this concept in mind, teachers can provide opportunities for students to participate in cognitive activities to learn vocabulary progressively.

Besides, Nation (as cited in Nunan, 2003) lists the most common teaching vocabulary strategies. For instance, explaining the meaning of words and providing examples, teaching prefixes or suffixes, using bilingual cards, practicing spelling rules, and doing cloze exercises to find missing words in texts, are deliberate learning activities that learners can do to learn through input. Along the same line, Henrikson (1999) states that guessing from context is one of the principal strategies to teach vocabulary and use it as a pre-reading strategy. Besides, he names some strategies to teach vocabulary, such as providing definitions, providing examples, explaining contrast and similar words, considering background knowledge of students, labeling, categorizing words, use of vocabulary finders, scramble format, and use of pictures to support the learning vocabulary process as well as the improvement of reading comprehension skills. According to Ellis (1994), the importance of implementing these strategies can improve how students know and use words to develop reading comprehension. Additionally, Wessels (2011)

claims that it is crucial for teachers to implement several strategies to present vocabulary before students encounter text due to vocabulary knowledge is pivotal for students to be successful readers. Similarly, Gunning (2005) explains that vocabulary knowledge is one of the main barriers for students to achieve reading comprehension.

Likewise, some authors such as Henrikson (1999) and Alemi and Ebadi (2010) also reinforce the importance of pre-reading strategies to foster reading comprehension skills and reinforce vocabulary teaching that may help students in their reading development. Some of those pre-reading strategies are word association, discussions, text surveys, pre-questioning, vocabulary pre-teaching, predictions, and pictorial contexts. Furthermore, Alemi and Ebadi (2010) suggest that an interactive model of reading comprehension skills entails the significance of processing words in a text. Similarly, Anderson (as cited in Nunan, 2003) claims the importance of bottom-up and top-down teaching strategies in reading to support reading comprehension through basic letters, sounds, morphemes, and word recognition, as well as background knowledge to foster reading comprehension development. Considering the effectiveness of both strategies, it will be suitable for teachers to implement them to foster the development of reading comprehension skills. Given the above, pre-reading strategies can be implemented to reinforce and facilitate readers' interaction with a text and to provide orientation to the content and context of the text in order to achieve reading comprehension (Hudson, 1982).

***c. Scaffolding reading comprehension skills.***

Several experts discuss that scaffolding is a provisional teaching strategy used to guide, support, and assist students when they encounter difficulties in overcoming a task. In fact, Hammond & Gibbons (2005) recognize scaffolding as “temporary assistance that teachers provide to students to complete a task or to develop new understandings” (p.15). Similarly,

Samantas (2013) proposes scaffolding as temporary support that individuals receive from more knowledgeable others: teachers or peers in a collaborative classroom. Therefore, it can be helpful to consider implementing scaffolding within the EFL classroom, to assist and guide students to cope with vocabulary challenges when developing reading activities.

Furthermore, Stahl (2003) argues for a strong relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. In fact, he supports that knowing words allows people to understand texts, either written or oral. Similarly, McCarten (2007) concludes that students “who know the most frequent 2.000 words should be able to understand almost 80 percent of the words in an average text” (p.1). In the same line, Nation (2006) argues that it is important to consider the relationship between lexical coverage and reading comprehension to decide the amount of vocabulary L2 learners might know to perform different tasks. In particular, González - Fernández & Schmitt (2017) report that “L2 learners often acknowledge that the lack of or poor vocabulary knowledge is the main reason for their difficulties in acquiring, comprehending, and using an L2” (p. 280). Likewise, Sumanto (2017) states that students with low vocabulary development find that their reading comprehension ability is limited. According to this, it is crucial that English teachers design their lessons and learning material by considering high-frequency words and the appropriate context for students to cope with the challenge of reading in a foreign language.

Significantly, Graves (1986, as cited in Stahl, 2003) recognizes that students might not need to know the entire meaning of each word presented in a text to understand its passages, but just knowing a definition for a word can contribute to understanding the word and then the context of the text. Despite the aforementioned, Nagy (2007) reveals that children may fail to effectively use the context to find the meaning of a word, thus not being able to comprehend a

text. Also, he indicates that teachers may use collaborative strategic reading interventions to teach unfamiliar words. In other words, teachers must scaffold teaching vocabulary to accomplish students' reading comprehension skills. Further, Gibbons (2014) suggests strategies to use within the EFL classroom to facilitate student reading comprehension. For instance, pre-reading activities such as predicting from visuals or predicting the main ideas cannot only be a means to scaffold the development of reading comprehension but also reinforce vocabulary development. Similarly, Clark & Graves (2005) discuss how other pre-reading activities could be helpful to scaffold reading comprehension skills. Subsequently, the authors propose pre-teaching vocabulary and pre-teaching concepts to support and guide the comprehension process. In fact, Tudor (1989) suggests that vocabulary pre-teaching is an effective manner to assist students in the activation of appropriate content schemata to improve students' reading comprehension. Likewise, Stahl (2003) found that vocabulary teaching improves reading comprehension. In particular, Wachyuni (2016) developed an experiment regarding the role of scaffolding in reading comprehension skills at the University of Jambi. He concluded that scaffolding significantly affects the development of reading comprehension skills by supporting students to get the main ideas, make inferences, or summarize a text in a collaborative learning setting (p.149). Thereby, vocabulary pre-teaching activities directly upgrade students' reading comprehension. In that sense, EFL teachers must use strategies to scaffold the process of how the students acquire and use vocabulary in order for them to strengthen their reading comprehension skills in a foreign language.

### **III. Research Question**

*What vocabulary teaching strategies do I use to scaffold the development of reading comprehension skills in my 10th- grade students?*

### **IV. Research Methodology.**

The following section presents the methodology and rationale behind the data collection process of this self-study research. It is important to mention that research intends to systematically investigate a phenomenon about a specific subject in order to establish facts and provide some conclusions regarding a specific topic (Opie, 2007). This research is a self-study which is a “personal, systematic inquiry situated within one’s own teaching context that requires critical and collaborative reflection in order to generate knowledge” (Samaras, 2011, p.10). In this sense, self-study can contribute to improve our own teaching practice as well as collaborate to grow knowledge in education and teaching fields (Samaras, 2011). Therefore, self-study research entails inquiry, collaboration, questioning, learning, and knowledge generation. Since this study aimed to explore and understand what are my teaching strategies of vocabulary, it was framed by using a qualitative approach.

#### **a. Research approach**

The present self-study was framed by a qualitative approach due to its nature and it was expected to gather data to answer the research question and to reflect on my teaching practice when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills. Thus, considering that the aim of this research was analyzing my in-classroom decisions as a pre-service teacher. According to Creswell (2012), qualitative research can provide more details about human behavior, emotions, and personal characteristics since it is used to understand concepts, thoughts,

or experiences. The author amplifies that the qualitative method is useful for exploring problematic situations and developing a detailed understanding of the phenomenon that is being studied. Furthermore, Kostoulas and Lämmerer (2015) claim that qualitative research aims to identify patterns to generate an understanding of a specific phenomenon. In that sense, this approach was feasible to gather data by summarizing, organizing, and classifying into categories or sections in order to interpret the results and find strong connections between those categories with my teaching practice. Given the above, this approach was suitable for finding the appropriate data to explore what are my teaching vocabulary strategies. Finally, triangulation was implemented to increase the validity and credibility of the findings gathered from the different sources (Heale and Noble, 2019).

#### **b. Data collection tools**

The required data for this study was collected by using classroom observations, artifact analysis, and a questionnaire.

##### **1) Classroom Observation**

The first instrument used was classroom observations. As Kabir (2016) points out, observations are a specific form of examination of classroom teaching and/or learning activities through a systematic collection of focused data to address core issues or phenomena. Following this definition, observations are a suitable tool to obtain a better understanding of my teaching practice and my behavior in the classroom when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills. These observations provided meaningful insights, behaviors, or patterns that build my teaching practice regarding the topic of this research. This tool was implemented after designing a semi-structured observation protocol (See Appendix A) framed by three criteria for the observer to

register what are my teaching vocabulary strategies to scaffold reading comprehension and how they are frequently used. The observation protocol was expected to ensure that the criteria were well organized for afterward data analysis and to maintain a consistent focus of the research. This observation was implemented twice by a non-participant in this study. My practicum peer observed my strategies and behaviors when teaching vocabulary, attempting an unbiased perspective.

## **2) Artifact Analysis**

The second tool used was artifact analysis to understand and elicit information about personal experiences. The main characteristic of artifact collection is that any piece of written information can be classified as an artifact (Bowen, 2009). As Allender and Manke (2008) state, “the use of artifact analysis provides tangible evidence about teaching and learning experiences” (p.250). Furthermore, this tool is useful for gathering information by using insights or personal experiences to generate new ideas or to make personal conclusions that can be addressed in a specific situation or context within the research (Samaras, 2011). The artifact used in this research was four lesson plans designed for the Final Practicum in 2022 (See Appendix B). The reason for using this instrument was to analyze and gather data from my own experiences when designing lessons, specifically focusing on vocabulary and reading comprehension aspects. In self-study, experiences and reflections are pivotal. Therefore, the use of lesson plans was expected to be fruitful for the research as they illustrate my experiences in pedagogical contexts since 2021. The results of this artifact analyses were expected to offer conclusions about my teaching practice when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension. Additionally, I intended to analyze whether and which teaching

vocabulary strategies were present in my lesson plans to understand and conclude how they can be meaningful to scaffold students' reading comprehension.

### **3) Questionnaire.**

The third tool used was a questionnaire. A questionnaire consists of a number of questions that participants have to answer in a set format (Kabir, 2016). As Dornyei (2011) claims, questionnaires are suitable to measure attitudinal questions to find out what people think, covering opinions, beliefs, interests, and attitudes. For this research, a questionnaire was used as it can allow me to elicit information to understand students' beliefs, opinions, attitudes, and concerns regarding the teaching of vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension (See Appendix C). The rationale behind using this tool is that it can provide valuable sources of information to address the research question. The student's answers were collected by using open-ended questions that will be coded into a response scale after implementation. The use of open-ended questions revealed data related to behaviors, facts, opinions, and experiences of the students.

#### **c. Data Analysis Approach.**

The data analysis approach implemented in this self-study was thematic coding. According to what Creswell (2012) proposes, analyzing data entails preparing and organizing the data gathered to reduce the data by classifying through the process of coding. Then this organized data was classified and labeled into codes or descriptive themes that allowed the researcher to examine and explore to understand repetitive patterns, behaviors, and actions within the data collected to find relationships between them. To summarize, the coding process of qualitative data entailed collecting, analyzing,

legitimate, and interpreting data in order to provide results or findings meaningful to the research (Frels et al., 2011).

Furthermore, an inductive approach was used in this research because it facilitated the organizing of the categories considering arising knowledge from the data gathered. According to Elo and Kyngas (2008), “the aim of open coding is to reduce the number of categories provided to the data to higher order categories ”(p.111). In that sense, the researcher coded data according to categories arising from the data in order to facilitate the process of organization and to maintain the focus of the research. Additionally, open coding used in this self-study allowed to organize the data in concepts systematically. After identifying the different themes and codes gathered they were separated in order to analyze to discover potential findings.

## **V. Research Findings.**

In this section, the findings obtained after analyzing the data analysis process of my self-study research will be presented. Subsequently, a discussion of the findings will address the possible answers to my research question: *What vocabulary teaching strategies do I use to scaffold the development of reading comprehension skills in my 10th- grade students?*

### **Findings**

As mentioned before, the findings were revealed by analyzing the data collected using different instruments such as observations, a questionnaire, and artifact analysis. Several codes were established to frame the data collected. After analyzing the collected data, several primary findings, i.e., insights strongly related to my research question, were found. Also, the data analysis revealed secondary findings which describe insights that are not entirely related to my

research question but can be useful in providing other information regarding my teaching practice.

The majority of findings registered the implementation of teaching strategies of vocabulary at the pre-stage of the lessons as well as the use of pre-reading strategies that scaffold students reading comprehension development. For instance, the primary findings evince the use of imagery, examples, and definitions to present vocabulary and predictions, guessing from context, and categorizing vocabulary as pre-reading strategies to scaffold vocabulary and build strong connections between vocabulary and the text that students read in the lessons.

### **Primary Findings**

#### *a) The use of imagery to present vocabulary.*

In the data analysis, the findings discovered that different strategies, such as using imagery, providing definitions and examples, using videos, and categorizing vocabulary were used when I taught vocabulary in the 10th-grade EFL class. Furthermore, according to the evidence provided by the data instruments, imagery is one that was present in all the lesson plans and all observations, and it is the strategy that the students recognize more frequently in classes. For instance in the questionnaire, a student supported this by saying: *“la miss nos enseña vocabulario mayoritariamente a través de imágenes, definiciones y ejemplos”*. Correspondingly, most of the participants asserted that the teacher used imagery to present vocabulary. Besides, in the lesson plans, a pattern is recurrently implemented at the pre-stage of the lessons. The repeated presentation of vocabulary through the use of imagery, specifically by using a pictionary, was found. In the observations, the observer revealed vocabulary presentation through imagery which was guided by questions for students to convey the meaning of each word. Finally, in all analyzed lesson plans, a pictionary was found as a resource that uses

imagery, definitions, and examples to present vocabulary to support the reading process. Thus, imagery is the unique strategy set as a usual strategy implemented by the teacher.

***b) The use of pre-reading strategies to scaffold reading comprehension skills.***

Regarding the scaffolding process of reading comprehension skills of the students, it was found that the teacher usually implemented some pre-reading strategies to guide the learning/reading process of students. In that regard, pre-reading strategies such as making predictions, guessing from context, and categorizing vocabulary were the main strategies the teacher used to guide this process. The observations showed that the teacher used predictions with the support of imagery to help students guess from context the topic of the text they were going to read. For instance, the observer noted down in the protocol, “... *students have to predict the text using similar images to the ones presented at the pre-stage. The teacher guides the activity with some questions that can relate to the context of the images and use students' previous knowledge*”. These strategies are also settled in the lesson plans analyzed. According to the evidence provided by the lesson plans, in the before-reading stage of the class, the teacher also recurred to using predictions with imagery as a pre-reading strategy. Likewise, some students were conscious of this strategy, and most of them declared it in the questionnaires, “*la miss nos guía mediante imágenes, ya que al mostrar imágenes podemos predecir el texto que leeremos y así es más fácil de entender*” and “*la profesora refuerza el vocabulario antes de leer los textos haciendo predicciones con imágenes para que nosotros entendamos bien el contexto*”.

***c) The use of categorizing vocabulary as a pre-reading strategy.***

Finally, another pre-reading strategy that was repeatedly addressed in students' answers to questionnaires was categorizing vocabulary before encountering a text. Students declared that the teacher usually used this strategy in order for them to focus on key vocabulary and to know

its role in the text they were going to read to facilitate the reading comprehension process. For instance, one participant declared that *“la profesora usa tablas que clasifican los tipos de palabras, ya que nos muestra lo que significan y a qué grupo o tipos de palabras pertenecen. (verbos, sustantivos, adjetivos, etc) y eso me sirve para leer más fácil”* and *“utiliza tablas de clasificación y pregunta a la clase que creen que significa cada palabra y va rellenando ésta, lo que nos permite a todos participar y entender mejor el vocabulario antes de leer el texto”*. This answers evinced the use of categorizing vocabulary in tables before students encounter the text. Similarly, this strategy was also evinced in the data analysis of all lesson plans in the pre and during-reading stages of the lesson in order for students to reinforce vocabulary encountered in the texts read. Finally, from the observer's perspective, this strategy was used in two analyzed classes. As stated in the observation protocol,

*“Before the students read the text, the teacher asks them to scan and look for verbs and words that they do not know in the text and then categorize them according to a table that she writes on the board and then uses to discuss this vocabulary with her students”*

**d) The vocabulary taught in the class is encountered in the texts students should read.**

According to the analysis of the data collected, it was found that the vocabulary taught in the class was presented in all the texts that students should read as a part of the class. These findings can be supported by the data collection instruments. In fact, it was evinced through the lesson plans that vocabulary is a crucial aspect of each lesson to prepare students to read, which was always present in the pre-stage of the lessons. Additionally, the observer noticed how students faced the text and its content by considering the vocabulary previously taught. Besides, the student responses in the questionnaires ensured that all the vocabulary taught in the lessons

served to scaffold reading comprehension skills due to the strong connection with the texts. Moreover, all the vocabulary studied through the class was part of the text that students read during the while-stage of the class. Several students declared in the questionnaire that “... *el vocabulario que nos enseñan está literalmente relacionado con los textos que luego leemos.*” and “... *el vocabulario que estudiamos es muy amplio y conectado con los textos que leemos. Y las palabras que estudiamos después aparecen en el texto y podrían ayudar a comprenderlo*”. Given that, it was found that the teaching vocabulary strategies used in the pre-stage of the lesson supported students in coping with the development of reading skills within the lessons.

### **Secondary Findings.**

#### **a) How the lack of vocabulary negatively impacts students’ reading process and self-esteem.**

Finally, this self-study research found secondary findings that I would like to explore in-depth, such as the negative feelings that students face when they can not understand a text due to the lack of vocabulary and also their willingness to learn and reinforce vocabulary through didactic approaches such as the using of games or music. For instance, in the questionnaire, several students answered how they felt when they did not understand a text: “*me siento frustrado y tonto, porque a veces entiendo el texto a la perfección y a veces no entiendo nada y me frustró porque al momento de responder sobre el texto no sé nada.*” and “*confundida y tonta ya que no sé cuál es el tema que se está tratando en el texto y no conozco lo que realmente se está queriendo decir o explicar*”. Considering that the vast majority of students agree with these answers, it made me reflect on the impact that teaching practices have on students’ learning process as well as on their self-esteem and perception regarding their foreign language learning.

**b) The use of games and music to learn vocabulary.**

Moreover, another secondary finding portrayed how some of the participants of the questionnaires want to learn vocabulary through the use of games and music, for instance, one student answered *“una manera de aprender vocabulario más fácil podría ser jugando algún juego en inglés o ver una película con subtítulos.”* and *“la manera que sería un poquito más fácil de aprender vocabulario sería usando canciones, dando ejemplos o jugando minijuegos como quizziz o kahoot”*. This finding allowed me to reflect about different teaching strategies to teach vocabulary in order for students to learn vocabulary through a more didactic approach and by considering their interests.

**Discussion of the findings**

The primary findings provide meaningful insights to address the research question of this self-study. In fact, it was demonstrated that I used imagery to present vocabulary. Moreover, it was found that I often implement pre-reading strategies such as predictions, guessing from context, and categorizing vocabulary to scaffold the reading comprehension skills of students. Additionally, secondary findings were discovered which is directly related to the vocabulary taught and reading comprehension.

The use of imagery, specifically a pictorial that includes definitions and examples of the words in order, is presented in the pre-stage of the lessons. To implement this strategy, it is pivotal to consider students' context and previous knowledge to select images according to them to create meaningful connections in order to facilitate students' learning. According to Allen and Marquez (2000), the use of imagery, specifically pictures, allows students to strengthen and reinforce the vocabulary presented as well as to absorb sensorial information that permits them to create connections between pictures and their previous knowledge. Likewise, Khafidhoh and

Carolina (2019) declare that the use of pictures to teach vocabulary may help students to illustrate and understand the meaning of concepts with positive outcomes, such as motivation and interest to learn words in a foreign language. These arguments support my decision to use imagery since its main purpose is to create meaningful connections between students' context and previous knowledge as well as motivation to learn vocabulary. Subsequently, considering the overall data analyzed it seems that it is useful and appropriate for students to learn with images and the possibility of facilitating their vocabulary learning process. Additionally, the use of imagery is meaningful to scaffold reading comprehension skills of students due to the positive response to its effect and subsequently enhance the understanding of the text (Carante & Delos Reyes, 2021). To summarize, the use of imagery in most of my classes fosters students' motivation and visual perception and creates meaningful connections with their previous knowledge in order to facilitate the effective retention and learning of vocabulary in the EFL classroom thus supporting reading comprehension (Boualleg, 2016). Moreover, the findings also demonstrated the usefulness of pre-reading strategies to scaffold reading comprehension skills, such as predictions, guessing from context, and categorizing vocabulary. According to the findings, these pre-reading strategies are usually implemented in order to prepare students to cope with the reading to be encountered in the while-stage of the lessons. In the same vein, Alemi and Ebadi (2010) declare that pre-reading strategies serve to guide and prepare students by activating their prior knowledge to cope with the text to be read in order to foster motivation as well as to ensure motivation for the text. Similarly, Budiharso (2014), argues that pre-reading strategies lead students to develop reading comprehension, through identifying main ideas, skimming and scanning, inferring ideas and using their prior knowledge to make connections with the text. Likewise, Mihara (2011) claims that it is pivotal to create instances of pre-reading

strategies with the use of predictions, pre-questioning, or categorizing vocabulary in order to linguistically prepare students to read in a foreign language effectively, since it provides opportunities to students to activate their critical thinking and to activate their schemata in order to develop their reading comprehension skills. As a whole, I implemented these types of activities due to the positive improvement and impact that they portrayed on students' reading comprehension skills development and also in vocabulary learning.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that these are some of the pre-reading strategies; in that sense, it would be pertinent and beneficial to include in my lessons other pre-reading strategies, such as discussions of the topic of the text or search reading that can provide relevant insights to prepare students to read and consequently improve their reading comprehension skills (Jenkinson, 1973). In fact, the use of these pre-reading strategies serves to prepare students to use their prior knowledge and beliefs in order to associate with the content of the text, thus activating the use of their schemata to encounter the text. Hence, accomplish what learning objectives from MINEDUC (2015) seeks to achieve such as demonstrating reading comprehension of main ideas in different types of texts about various topics.

Regarding the last finding, it was discovered that all the vocabulary taught in my lessons can be encountered in the texts that students work with during the during-reading stage of the lessons. I always present vocabulary in the pre-reading stage of the lesson in order for them to be prepared to recognize these words in the context of the text. In fact, according to Astan (2014) foreign language students can only accomplish reading comprehension if they know the vocabulary presented in the text. Similarly, Chowdhury and Arjumand (2021) argue that there should be a strong relationship between the vocabulary pre-taught with the vocabulary of the text that students should read in order to facilitate vocabulary development and reading

comprehension. In the same vein, Trehearne and Doctorow (2005), support the necessity of readers to “employ vocabulary, prior knowledge, metacognitive information and reading strategies to develop their reading comprehension skills” (p.87). Moreover, these authors claim that by exposing students to pre-taught vocabulary, they are more likely to obtain positive outcomes such as the full comprehension of the text, a decrease in their fear of failing, and an increase in their motivation for the text. Nevertheless, Armbruster and Nagy (1992) state that connecting the vocabulary of the lesson with the text can limit the will of students to read autonomously and reduce their motivation to read the text, thus not allowing them to comprehend or reflect on the text.

Considering the discussion of the findings in this self-study, I am allowed to question and reflect on my vocabulary teaching strategies to scaffold reading comprehension skills. Having these arguments in mind, I am honest to say that even though my vocabulary teaching and pre-reading strategies are pertinent to my context and students’ characteristics, I have to improve them in order to not repeat and overuse patterns when teaching.

### **Action Plan.**

Given the above, it is mandatory for me to create and design an action plan in order to not misuse and overuse the same strategies when teaching. In fact, Furhman et al. (2010) argue that effective teachers use a variety of strategies that support students' learning process. The action plan to be implemented will consider a different strategy than imagery, for example, presenting vocabulary with mimic or gestures in order for students to attempt to convey meaning.

Additionally, regarding the scaffolding of reading comprehension, I will change the overuse of predictions as a pre-reading strategy, and I will provide instances to implement pre-questioning activities or generate discussion on the topic of the text to create strong connections and support

the reading process of students. Finally, as Siyanova-Chanturria and Webb (2017) argue, exposing students to extensive viewing and reading in order to autonomously develop vocabulary acquisition supports their reading comprehension development. In fact, extensive viewing acts as a means to lead repeated encounters with vocabulary items for students. Finally, extensive reading can provide effective opportunities for students to encounter the same lexical items in order for them to analyze and restore it, thus enlarging their vocabulary size and reading comprehension.

### **Research Implications**

The findings of this research have several implications for my future teaching practice. Firstly, this self-study has helped me to understand and reflect upon the role of scaffolding in the reading comprehension process of students in an EFL classroom. In fact, I noticed that scaffolding had a positive impact on the development of vocabulary and reading comprehension skills of the students, allowing them to think and reflect critically about the text read, thus developing reading comprehension skills. Secondly, this self-study allowed me to investigate and explore my vocabulary teaching strategies to scaffold and guide the reading comprehension skills development of students in my final practicum experience. For instance, the findings revealed that I overused the same pattern when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills. Despite that, these strategies provided the lessons that I implemented with positive outcomes in terms of reading comprehension development of students. It is pivotal to mention that it can also demotivate or provoke a lack of participation in the lessons due to the monotony these strategies might produce. Regarding this situation, it is mandatory for me as a future English teacher to be committed to students' learning and innovate not only my vocabulary strategies but also my pre-reading strategies in order to create an English class that does not

follow just a pattern of teaching. Furthermore, the overuse of these teaching strategies might harm or limit the motivation and willingness of students to develop reading comprehension activities.

Thirdly, this self-study provided me the opportunity to explore what are my specific strategies when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills. For instance, the use of imagery and pre-reading strategies are the most common strategies used by me. Hence, the findings of the specific strategies can help me to nurture and improve those strategies when teaching in another setting by providing me a framework of their use, effectiveness, pertinence and also to expect different types of outcomes.

Finally, the insights obtained in the development of this research also gave me the possibility to reflect on my teaching persona and my teaching practices in order to improve and nurture my professional development as an EFL teacher. Similarly, this process also makes me reflect on my professionalism as a pre-service teacher and future teacher that I still have to improve in order to create meaningful learning outcomes for students.

## **Conclusions**

This study has provided insights and findings to specifically answer the research question of this work regarding the strategies used to present vocabulary to scaffold students' reading comprehension. On the one hand, the literature review portrayed in this research allowed me to investigate, explore and make connections with my prior knowledge as well as my pedagogical practices. The literature review also provided me with the support of key concepts about vocabulary and its strong relationship with reading comprehension. On the other hand, this self-study provided me with meaningful findings related to the strategies that I use to teach vocabulary to scaffold students' reading comprehension. For instance, it allowed me to identify,

understand and learn about those teaching strategies when teaching vocabulary such as the use of visual aids, guessing from context, use of definitions and examples as well as the implementation of different pre-reading strategies that support the learning and reading comprehension of students. It can be concluded that those teaching strategies were pertinent to implement in the setting where this study was developed.

Additionally, this self-study made me reflect on my professionalism, and how the reading process of students was developed. Hence, the findings evinced that the teaching strategies used to teach vocabulary in the lessons served to scaffold reading comprehension skills due to the strong connection with the texts. The findings revealed that vocabulary pre-teaching is required to assist and activate students' schemata and subsequently improve the students reading comprehension. In that regard, strong connections between vocabulary and reading comprehension were portrayed in the development of this study. Moreover, the vocabulary teaching strategies I used, such as the use of pictionary, visual aids, guessing from context, and exemplifying or defining words as well as the use of different pre-reading strategies namely predictions or categorizing vocabulary were supported according to different authors portrayed in the literature review of this study. Furthermore, the findings evinced the feasible implementation of the teaching strategies about vocabulary and reading considering what MINEDUC (2015) states in Bases Curriculares for 10th grade to select and use strategies to support the comprehension of the texts read by students such as pre-reading, reading and post-reading. Despite this fact, it is important to mention that this study also provided me with findings regarding some aspects to consider when teaching vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension, such as the consideration of implementing music or movies to teach vocabulary as well as not overusing the same strategies when teaching.

Likewise, this self-study brought me knowledge about the topic, a new understanding of my beliefs when teaching, and also ensured students learned in a quality EFL classroom. As a whole, this self-study allowed me to enrich my teaching persona and my teaching process, to be more conscious of students' learning, and to provide them with worthwhile instances to learn a second language.

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## Appendix A

### Observation Protocol Self-study Research

**Objective:**

The use of the following instrument will provide opportunities to gather information about my teaching strategies when teaching vocabulary. It is expected that this instrument collects, using some criteria to focus on specific information about what strategies, procedures, and several elements are present when I teach vocabulary.

<b>Observer's name:</b>			
<b>Grade:</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>N° of students:</b>	<b>N° observation:</b>

	<b>Strategies used</b>
<p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary, serves to scaffold reading comprehension)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>- Material used:</b></p>	

(resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)

**Other comments:** (related only with vocabulary teaching to scaffold reading comprehension)

## Appendix B

Artifact analyzed: Paula Maluenda's lesson plans

	<b>Strategies used</b>
<p>1. <b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary, serves to scaffold reading comprehension)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	
<p>2. <b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary, serves to scaffold reading comprehension)</p>	

	<p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	
3.	<p><b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	
4.	<p><b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	

5.	<p><b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	
6.	<p><b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	

7.	<p><b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	
8.	<p><b>-Course and year:</b></p> <p><b>- Stage of teaching vocabulary:</b> (pre or before reading):</p> <p><b>-Purpose of the activity:</b> (present, recall, use vocabulary)</p> <p><b>-Vocabulary used:</b> (vocabulary of the lesson)</p> <p><b>-Material used:</b> (resources used to teach vocabulary and reading, such as literary or non-literary texts.)</p>	

**Appendix C**  
**Qualitative Questionnaire**  
**Self-study research project**

**Objective:** The following instrument is a questionnaire that contemplates the use of open questions in order for students to answer them and gather data regarding the teaching of vocabulary to scaffold reading comprehension skills.

**Questions:**

**1. ¿Crees que es difícil aprender inglés sin saber vocabulario? Explica tu respuesta.**

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**2. ¿Crees que es importante saber el significado de las palabras en inglés? Explica tu respuesta.**

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**3. ¿Cuál crees sería una manera de aprender vocabulario en inglés? (A través de imágenes, dando ejemplos, videos, mímicas, diccionarios,etc) Justifica tu respuesta.**

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**4. ¿De qué manera creen que la profesora les enseña mayoritariamente vocabulario? (A través de gestos, definiciones, ejemplos, categorizando vocabulario, imágenes, mímica, antónimos y sinónimos, etc)**

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**5. ¿Cómo crees que reforzar el vocabulario antes de leer un texto puede ayudar a tu comprensión lectora? Explica tu respuesta.**

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**6. ¿Cómo te gustaría aprender vocabulario en inglés? ( A través de imágenes, definiciones, usando un diccionario, ejemplos, mímica, gestos,etc) Justifica tu respuesta.**

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**7. ¿Crees que es difícil entender un texto en inglés sin saber vocabulario relacionado con éste? Explica tu respuesta.**

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**8. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando no comprendes un texto en inglés? Justifica tu respuesta.**

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**9. ¿Qué crees que podría ayudarte a mejorar tu comprensión lectora en inglés? Justifica tu respuesta.**

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**10. ¿Qué recursos utiliza la profesora para enseñar vocabulario que permita la comprensión del texto? (definiciones, ejemplos, tablas que clasifican palabras, imágenes, mímicas, etc) Justifica tu respuesta.**

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**11. ¿Ven conexiones entre el vocabulario que se trabaja en clases y los textos?  
¿Cuáles?**

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