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Impact of Teaching Technical Vocabulary for Specific Purposes on Engagement in Vocational Education Contexts

Treball de Final de Màster Universitari en Formació del Professorat d'Educació Secundària Obligatòria i Batxillerat, Formació Professional i Ensenyaments d'Idiomes.

Especialitat en Llengua Anglesa

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of teaching technical vocabulary in vocational English courses. Based on the observation that students often struggle to see the relevance of English to their future careers, a six-week intervention was implemented using English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) approaches. The core activity involved producing instructional videos about tools and safety procedures, aiming to contextualise vocabulary learning and promote active language use. Results showed a notable improvement in technical vocabulary retention—especially in productive tasks—and reduced variability in student performance. Participants expressed high levels of satisfaction, highlighting the activity's relevance and usefulness. These findings suggest that embedding specific vocabulary into real-world tasks can enhance both motivation and learning outcomes in vocational education settings.

Keywords*: technical English, vocational education, motivation, ESP, TBL*

RESUM

Aquest treball analitza l'impacte de l'ensenyament de vocabulari tècnic en l'àmbit de l'anglès per a la formació professional. Partint de la percepció que molts estudiants consideren l'anglès com una assignatura poc connectada amb els seus interessos professionals, es va dur a terme una intervenció de sis setmanes basada en els enfocaments d'Anglès amb Finalitats Específiques (ESP) i Aprenentatge Basat en Tasques (TBL). L'activitat central consistia en la creació de vídeos d'instruccions sobre eines i protocols de seguretat, amb l'objectiu de contextualitzar l'aprenentatge i fomentar l'ús actiu de la llengua. Els resultats mostren una millora significativa en la retenció de lèxic tècnic, especialment en tasques de producció, així com una reducció de la variabilitat entre estudiants. A més, la majoria va valorar positivament l'experiència, destacant la rellevància i aplicabilitat de l'activitat. Aquestes troballes suggereixen que incorporar vocabulari específic en tasques aplicables al món real pot millorar tant la motivació com els resultats de l'aprenentatge en contextos de formació professional.

Paraules clau: *anglès tècnic, formació professional, motivació, ESP, TBL*

1. Objectives and justification

The reason I became interested in this topic stems from my experience as an educator in agricultural and forestry vocational education settings. Over the years, I have observed how students often struggle to perceive the relevance of English to their future careers, which significantly impacts their motivation and engagement. This challenge is particularly apparent in students with varying levels of English proficiency, who find it difficult to connect traditional language instruction to their professional aspirations. This has inspired me to explore methods of making English instruction more practical and directly applicable to their vocational contexts. Reflecting on this issue, I identified the potential of methodologies such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) to address these challenges. Unlike traditional grammar-focused lessons, ESP and TBL advocate for the integration of context-specific technical vocabulary and industry-relevant tasks into the curriculum. By tailoring the curriculum to align with students' professional aspirations, these methodologies can potentially improve both their motivation and language retention.

The principles of ESP and TBL resonate strongly with several readings from our course, which have emphasised the importance of situating learning within authentic contexts. For instance, Brown (2009) highlights the potential disconnect between teachers' and students' perceptions of effective foreign language teaching practices, emphasising the importance of aligning teaching methods with students' expectations to foster engagement and satisfaction. This aligns with the broader understanding that effective instruction must not only be contextually relevant but also incorporate student input and address their perceptions of practicality and utility. Moreover, Snow (2005) and Tomlinson (2010) have observed that while institutions and teachers appear to be shifting toward a content-driven approach – where students gain more English and develop greater skills while focusing on their academic subject or profession – many ESP and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) published materials remain predominantly Language or skills-driven.

These approaches highlight that language acquisition is more effective when learners can immediately perceive its practical value. Similarly, Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) highlight in their work on student engagement that learners are more likely to invest effort when the material directly relates to their goals and interests. These insights have shaped my understanding and guided the development of my research objectives.

The primary aim of my TFM is to develop a framework for teaching English that is both meaningful and efficient for vocational students in the fields of agriculture and forestry. This framework seeks to address the gap between traditional English instruction and the specific linguistic needs of students preparing for technical careers. To achieve this, the study focuses on three interconnected objectives.

The first objective is to investigate how the teaching of context-specific technical vocabulary influences student engagement and language retention in vocational English classes. By examining this relationship, I aim to understand the extent to which relevant vocabulary can make language learning more appealing and pertinent to students.

The second objective is to evaluate the effect of teaching context-specific technical vocabulary through a Task-Based Learning approach on student engagement and language retention. This aspect of the study will explore how TBL methods, which emphasise practical, hands-on tasks, can enhance students' ability to retain and apply their language skills in professional settings.

The third objective is to develop strategies for effectively obtaining and utilising student feedback on vocabulary and instructional materials. By integrating student input into the curriculum design process, I hope to create a more responsive and engaging learning environment that addresses the diverse needs of learners.

Through this research, I hope to contribute to a more meaningful and efficient vocational English teaching practices, ensuring they are aligned with the realities of students' professional trajectories.

2. Literature Review

In an increasingly globalised world, the ability to communicate effectively in English is regarded as a fundamental skill, no longer merely as an academic asset but also for professional growth and mobility. This is particularly important for students in vocational education, where the development of English proficiency tailored to specific industries and productive sectors plays a crucial role. However, while vocational education provides students with practical skills and technical knowledge, the integration of generic English instruction into the curriculum is often met with resistance due to its limited perceived contextual relevance and consequent lack of engagement from the students.

English for Specific Purposes is a specialised branch of language instruction designed to focus on the specific communicative needs of learners within professional or academic fields. By engaging in industry-relevant content, ESP provides learners with a sense of purpose and applicability, which can significantly enhance their engagement and motivation. According to Ronaldo (2016), the development of teaching materials for vocational students should reflect the specific demands of their prospective professions, utilising authentic resources that bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. For example, in agricultural and forestry vocational contexts, students often struggle to perceive the relevance of English to their future careers, which can result in disengagement and diminished interest in the subject.

The incorporation of real-world tasks through ESP methodologies has the potential to make English instruction more relevant and appealing by connecting language learning to students' professional aspirations, ultimately fostering greater confidence in their ability to use English in practical scenarios.

A crucial component of ESP is the inclusion of context-specific technical vocabulary, which is essential for enabling vocational students to communicate accurately and effectively within their professional spheres.

Vocabulary teaching practices play a pivotal role in second language acquisition, particularly for

learners in vocational settings, where the immediate applicability of technical terms can significantly impact motivation and retention. Skarpaas and Rødnes (2022) emphasise the importance of tailoring vocabulary instruction to align with students' specific fields, arguing that such practices can deepen understanding and create meaningful connections between language learning and vocational skills.

Although vocabulary instruction plays a vital role in language learning, it is frequently overlooked or insufficiently addressed in traditional teaching models, highlighting the need for a more intentional and effective approach. Educators can address this gap by designing activities that incorporate contextual aspects from both inter- and intra-disciplinary sources, thereby enriching vocabulary acquisition and deepening learners' grasp of how language functions in various contexts. Skarpaas and Rødnes (2022) further argue that such an approach not only improves students' speaking and writing skills but also cultivates a sophisticated awareness of language, which is essential for vocational success.

Traditional English instruction often relies on generic materials that fail to resonate with vocational students, leading to low levels of motivation. In contrast, task-based instruction presents a dynamic alternative, offering a more engaging, challenging, and meaningful approach to language learning. Sarani and Sahebi (2012) suggest that task-based learning methods are more effective than conventional grammar-translation models, as they foster creativity and appeal to learners. Accordingly, Dinh and Hoang (2022a) point out the value of implementing Task-based Learning (TBL) in English classes in a vocational context, as a creative substitute for the widely used Traditional Teaching Method (TTM) model to make vocabulary learning more interesting and successful.

2.1 Engagement and motivation in Second Language Learning

In the context of second language acquisition, motivation is a pivotal factor influencing learners' success. Gardner's socio-educational model distinguishes between integrative motivation—the desire to learn a language to connect with its cultural community—and instrumental motivation,

which focuses on pragmatic benefits like employment opportunities. Both forms significantly impact language learning outcomes (Gardner, 2010b).

Gardner (2010b) states that integrative motivation, in particular, has been associated with higher levels of persistence and achievement in language learning. Learners with a genuine interest in integrating into the target language community tend to exhibit greater enthusiasm and commitment.

In vocational education, where language skills are tailored to specific industries, understanding these motivational dynamics is crucial. Aligning instructional materials with students' professional aspirations can enhance both integrative and instrumental motivation, leading to improved engagement and retention.

Therefore, incorporating authentic materials and context-specific vocabulary that resonate with students' career goals can foster a more motivated and effective learning environment. This approach not only addresses the practical needs of vocational students but also acknowledges the complex interplay of motivational factors in second language acquisition. Moreover, motivation in second language (L2) learning is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond initial interest to include sustained effort and dedication toward achieving linguistic competence (Dörnyei, 2001).

Effective L2 learning requires learners not only to be interested in acquiring new knowledge but also to remain engaged throughout the learning process, particularly when challenges arise. As noted by Dörnyei (2001, p. 25), "*it is highly unlikely that everybody can be motivated to learn everything, and even generally motivated students are not equally keen on every subject matter.*" This underscores the importance of instructional strategies that are tailored to learners' specific needs and interests.

Research on student motivation and engagement highlights the need to address both individual and situational factors to enhance learning outcomes. Ainley (2004) emphasises that students' motivation stems from personal goals and values as well as the learning conditions they

experience. Engagement, described as the connection between a person and an activity, is closely linked to effective learning environments. Moreover, it was found that fostering student-centred approaches, real-life relevance, and collaborative tasks enhances engagement, which is essential for sustained motivation and long-term success.

Afflerbach and Harrison (2017) further distinguish motivation as the drive to begin a task and engagement as the active investment in completing it. They note that classroom environments that allow students autonomy, present meaningful choices, and provide authentic materials aligned with learners' interests promote both motivation and engagement. In second language learning, this suggests that tailoring lessons to reflect students' personal and professional goals can create a dynamic learning experience that sustains both motivation and engagement over time.

Finally, Cunningham et al. (2022) stress the importance of aligning instructional design with students' aspirations to enhance engagement. In their study on vocational education, they found that redesigning course materials to incorporate authentic, context-specific tasks significantly improved participation and retention. This aligns with the broader understanding of motivation in second language acquisition, where the use of real-world, career-relevant materials can simultaneously nurture integrative and instrumental motivations.

Together, these studies highlight the critical interplay of motivation, engagement, and instructional design. For second language learners, particularly in vocational contexts, fostering motivation and engagement requires instructional strategies that are both personally meaningful and professionally relevant. By integrating authentic, context-specific content and promoting active participation, educators can create environments that maximise learning outcomes and address the multifaceted nature of L2 motivation.

2.2 Vocabulary Instruction in Vocational English Contexts

Vocabulary learning involves a series of interconnected tasks requiring strategic decision-making and cognitive effort (Gu, 2003). From initial encounters with new words to actively using them

in communication, learners employ a variety of strategies, such as context-based inference, dictionary consultation, note-taking, and repetition. The effectiveness of these strategies significantly impacts the retention and application of new vocabulary. Gu (2003) emphasises that the process of learning vocabulary is iterative and demands metacognitive awareness, where each choice of strategy shapes the overall learning outcome.

Oğuz and Bahar (2008) point out the importance of incorporating authentic materials into language instruction, as they reflect real-life contexts and provide learners with practical and cultural insights. Guariento and Morley (2001) further support the use of authentic materials, arguing that they encourage learners to engage more deeply with the language and expose them to its use beyond the classroom environment. It is crucial for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers not only to develop authentic materials but also to modify their use to cater to students' specific needs. Park (2024) highlights that learners perceive the use of authentic materials as an effective way to enhance their interest and motivation while also exposing them to authentic language use. For vocational students, authentic materials such as industry-specific documents, manuals, or case studies can make vocabulary acquisition more relevant and meaningful. However, these materials must be carefully selected to match learners' proficiency levels, ensuring that they remain accessible while challenging enough to promote learning.

Engaging students in the feedback process is another critical element of effective teaching. Collecting and utilizing student input serves not only to refine pedagogical practices but also to ensure that instructional materials meet learners' needs. Exploring strategies for gathering and incorporating student feedback promotes a learner-centred approach to vocational English instruction, which enhances the relevance and impact of language education. Therefore, after examining the existing research, we can identify several areas for further investigation, such as: how does the teaching of context-specific technical vocabulary influence student engagement in vocational English classes? Or, what is the effect of teaching context-specific technical vocabulary through a task-based approach on student engagement and

language retention in vocational English classes? Lastly, what strategies can be developed to effectively obtain and utilise student feedback on vocabulary and material activities in vocational English classes? These questions will be explored within vocational education contexts, aiming to align instructional methodologies with students' professional aspirations and contribute to the ongoing development of effective second language learning strategies.

3. Methodology

The study adopts a mixed-method research design, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches through the analysis of observable outcomes (vocabulary retention) and subjective experiences (perceived relevance and motivation through student feedback). The quantitative component provides measurable data on student engagement, motivation and language retention, while the qualitative component offers insights into students' experiences and perceptions, explicitly their engagement with technical-specific vocabulary instruction through task-based activities.

The investigation also follows an Action Research (AR) methodology, which is particularly suited for investigating practical issues arising within a specific educational context. This approach emphasises developing practical solutions where the final goal is to implement actions that foster change, drive improvement and deepen understanding to align English instruction with students' professional aspirations, making it more practical, engaging and contextually meaningful.

According to Burns (2010, p.2), "one of the main aims of AR is to identify a 'problematic' situation or issue that the participants (...) – who may include teachers, students, managers, administrators, or even parents – consider worth looking into more deeply and systematically." The research is conducted as an intervention-based classroom project, allowing for the direct evaluation and implementation of the proposed teaching strategies within the vocational college educational setting. This approach ensures that the findings remain relevant and applicable.

3.1 Intervention

The intervention (Annex I) focuses on improving students' technical vocabulary, comprehension, and communication skills in English through structured activities that culminate in the production of instructional videos on tool usage and safety. The intervention is divided into four weeks, each with specific objectives and activities designed to enhance linguistic and practical competencies.

The learning situation is structured to provide students with an engaging and hands-on approach to developing their language skills in a technical context. Initially, students build a strong foundation by exploring and practising essential vocabulary through interactive activities such as flashcard creation, video analysis, and instructional sequencing tasks. This phase ensures that learners acquire the necessary terminology and comprehension skills to understand and communicate effectively about tool usage and safety procedures.

Following this, students engage in research and scriptwriting, allowing them to investigate specific tools, analyse their functions, and articulate their findings in structured instructional scripts. This phase reinforces critical thinking and technical writing skills while emphasising clarity and precision in language use. The scripts serve as the blueprint for the subsequent filming activities, where students apply their knowledge in real-life demonstrations, ensuring both language proficiency and practical competence.

The final phase involves presenting and reflecting on the learning process. Students showcase their videos, receive peer feedback, and assess their performance based on predefined criteria. Through structured evaluation and self-reflection, they gain insights into their progress, identifying strengths and areas for improvement both for the students and the teachers.

3.2 Participants

The study involves a sample of 35 Agricultural and Forestry vocational students, divided into two classes. While this sample size enables a focused and in-depth exploration of the research questions, it also limits the generalisability of the results. This limitation is acknowledged, and

findings are interpreted with caution regarding broader application to different vocational settings.

3.3 Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through vocabulary assessments, surveys, self-evaluations, and questionnaires (Annex II). The vocabulary assessments comprised both pre- and post-tests designed to evaluate students' active (productive) and passive (recognition) knowledge of technical terminology relevant to their vocational domain. The test items focused on specialised vocabulary pertaining to hand and electrical tools, safety protocols, and workplace communication, thereby assessing the extent of vocabulary acquisition and retention throughout the intervention.

Quantitative data were obtained through structured surveys and questionnaires incorporating closed-ended questions utilising a Likert scale. These instruments facilitated the measurement of student engagement, motivation, and the perceived relevance of vocabulary instruction. Statistical analyses, including paired t-tests, have been employed to compare pre- and post-intervention results, offering objective insights into variations in language retention. Furthermore, students engaged in self-evaluations and provided feedback on videos they produced, adhering to a structured rubric. The evaluation criteria encompassed introduction, demonstration, safety measures, clarity and video quality, and conclusion, each rated on a scale from 1 to 4. This process enabled students to assess the strengths and areas for improvement in each video, encouraging reflective learning and peer-to-peer feedback.

Qualitative data have been gathered through observational notes, student reflections, and, where applicable, transcripts of focus group discussions. Observations documented student participation, interaction, and engagement during instructional sessions, aiming to assess the practical application of newly acquired vocabulary. Additionally, open-ended questions in the surveys and questionnaires encouraged students to articulate their perspectives on the usefulness and applicability of vocabulary instruction. Thematic analysis has been conducted to

categorise responses, aligning them with key research objectives, including student engagement, the perceived relevance of vocabulary learning, and the efficacy of task-based instruction in enhancing motivation and retention.

4.Results

4.1 Pre-Test Results

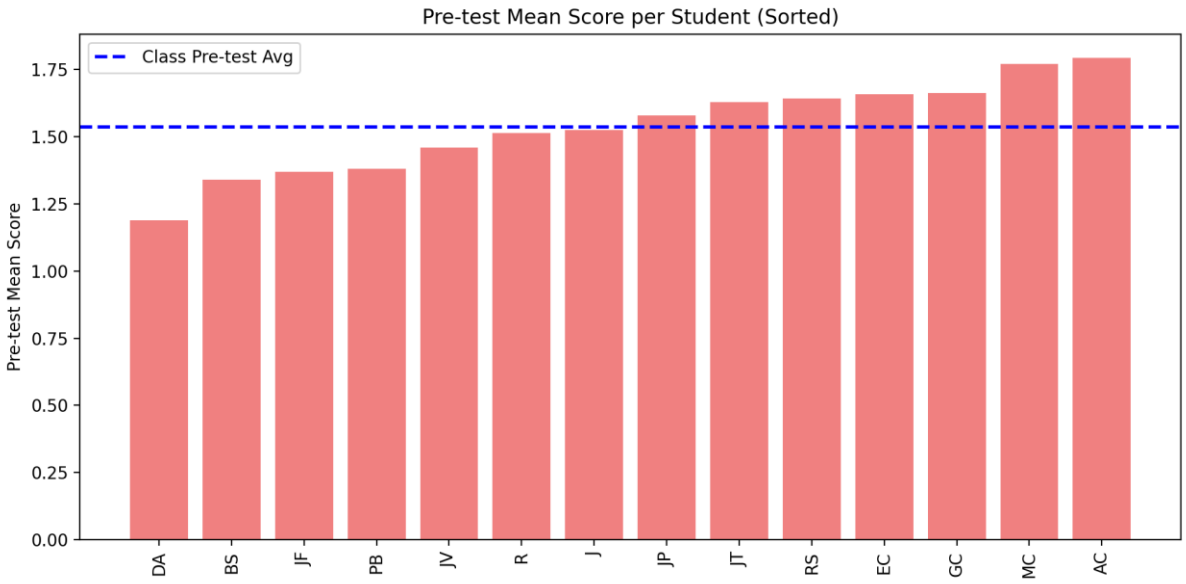

Figure 1: Pre-test Mean Score per Student ordered from lowest to highest

Figure 1 presents the individual mean scores of students in the pre-test, arranged from lowest to highest. Most scores cluster between 1.3 and 1.7, with several outliers on both extremes. The class average, indicated by a dashed blue line, stands at 1.53.

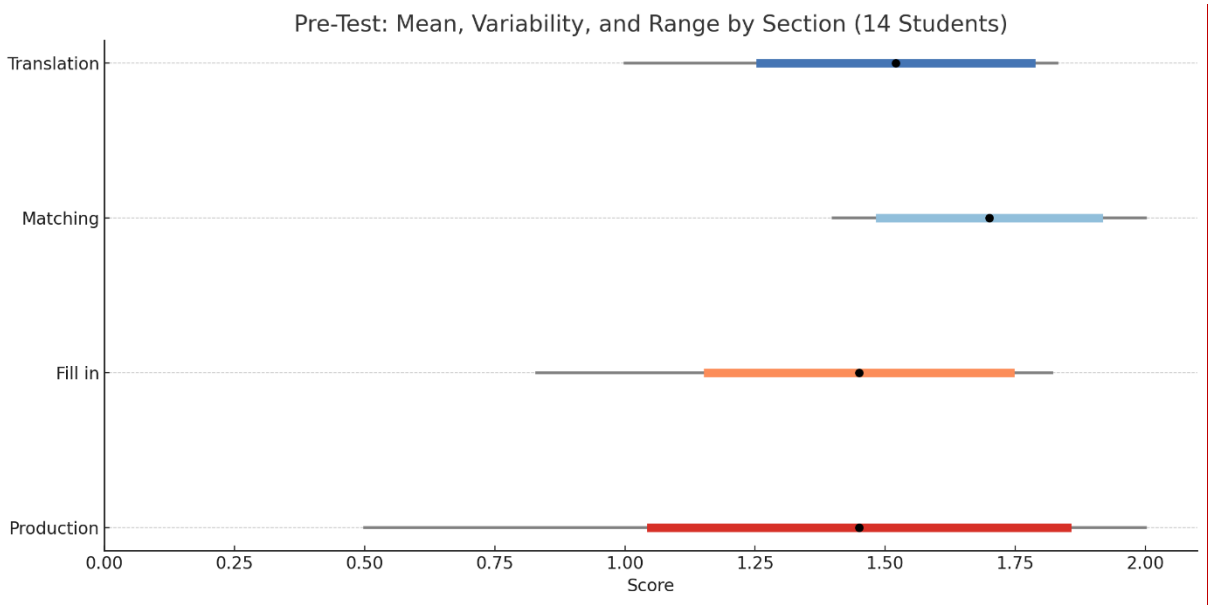

Figure 2: Pre-test Response Patterns Between Sections and Students

Figure 2 displays the distribution of responses across sections for each student in the pre-test using horizontal boxplots. The 'production' section exhibits the widest range and greatest variability in performance, indicating fluctuating levels of proficiency.

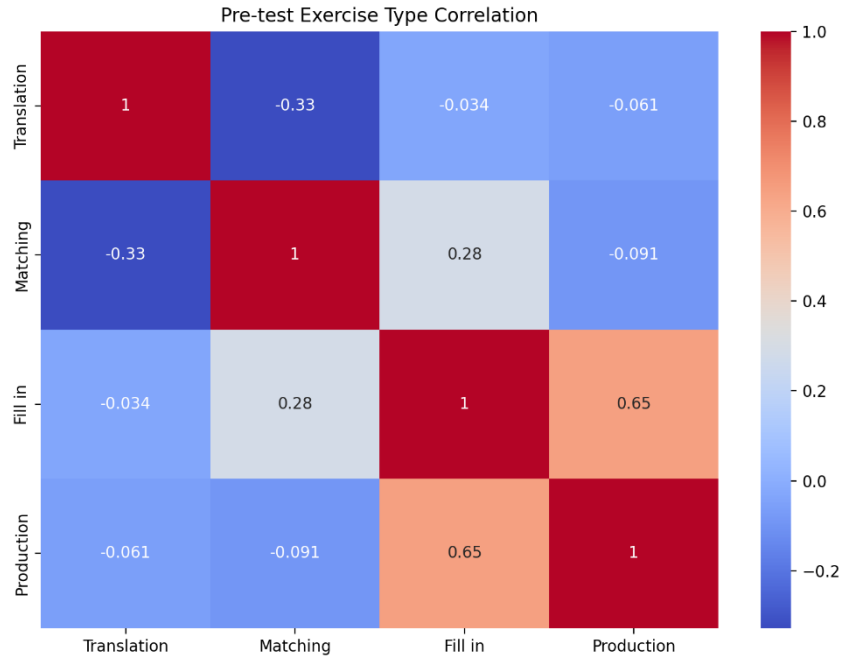

Figure 3: Pre-test Correlation Heatmap between Sections

Figure 3 shows a correlation heatmap depicting the strength of relationships between exercise types. A notable positive correlation is observed between 'fill-in' and 'production' (r = 0.65), while 'translation' displays weak or negative correlations, particularly with 'matching' (r = -0.33).

Table 1: ***Pre-test Analysis: Average Score Gaps Between Exercise Types***

Sections	Mean Difference
Translation vs Matching	0,223
Translation vs Fill in	0,019
Translation vs Production	0,02
Matching vs Fill in	0,242
Matching vs Production	0,203
Fill in vs Production	0,039

Table 1 details the average score differences between the various exercise types. The largest gap is identified between 'matching' and 'fill-in' (0.242), and the smallest between 'translation' and 'fill-in' (0.019), indicating differing levels of difficulty across sections.

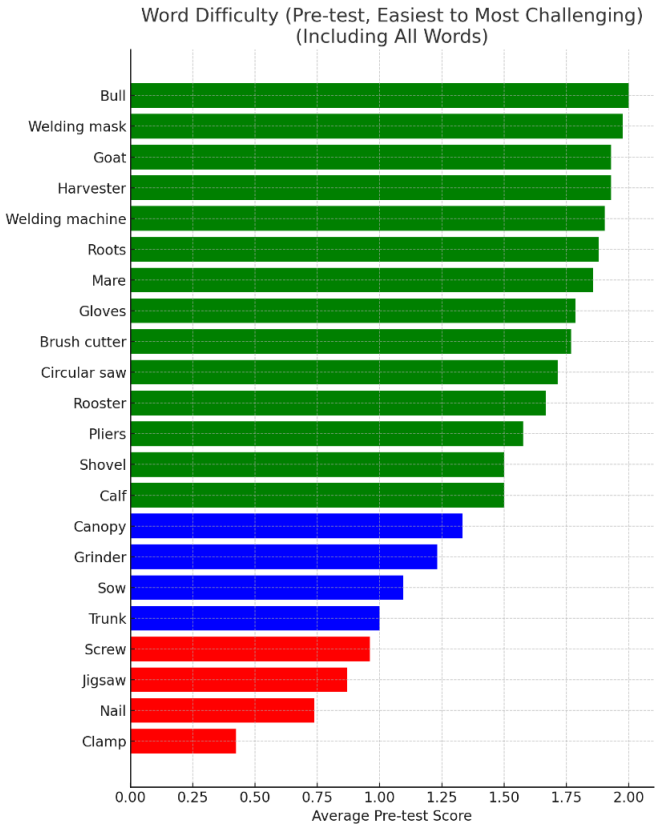

Figure 4: Word Difficulty Pre-test

Figure 4 illustrates word difficulty rankings based on pre-test performance, with colour coding

from green (easy) to red (difficult). The most challenging items included Clamp, Nail, Jigsaw, Screw, and Trunk.

4.2 Intervention Activities

Between the administration of the pre-test and post-test, a six week pedagogical intervention was implemented, structured around principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-Based Learning (TBL). While the full intervention lasted six weeks, the core learning situation (*8.1 Appendix I: Learning* Situation) was delivered during a focused four-week period. Activities were designed to foster contextualised vocabulary acquisition relevant to the students' vocational fields in agriculture and forestry.

Students engaged in scaffolded exercises such as word searches, crosswords, technical readings, pleasure reading and guided writing tasks, all focused on vocabulary related to hand and electric tools, usage procedures, safety protocols and farming and livestock. These activities built towards a culminating task: the production of a video tutorial, in which students explained the function, use, and safety measures of a selected tool. The process involved research, scriptwriting, video recording, and peer evaluation, thereby integrating both receptive and productive language skills in an authentic, profession-related context.

The learning activities were designed to promote not only lexical retention but also student engagement and perceived relevance of English in their future careers. The gains observed in post-test scores, particularly in productive tasks (e.g., fill-in and production exercises), must be interpreted in light of this practical, vocationally grounded intervention.

4.3 Post-test Results

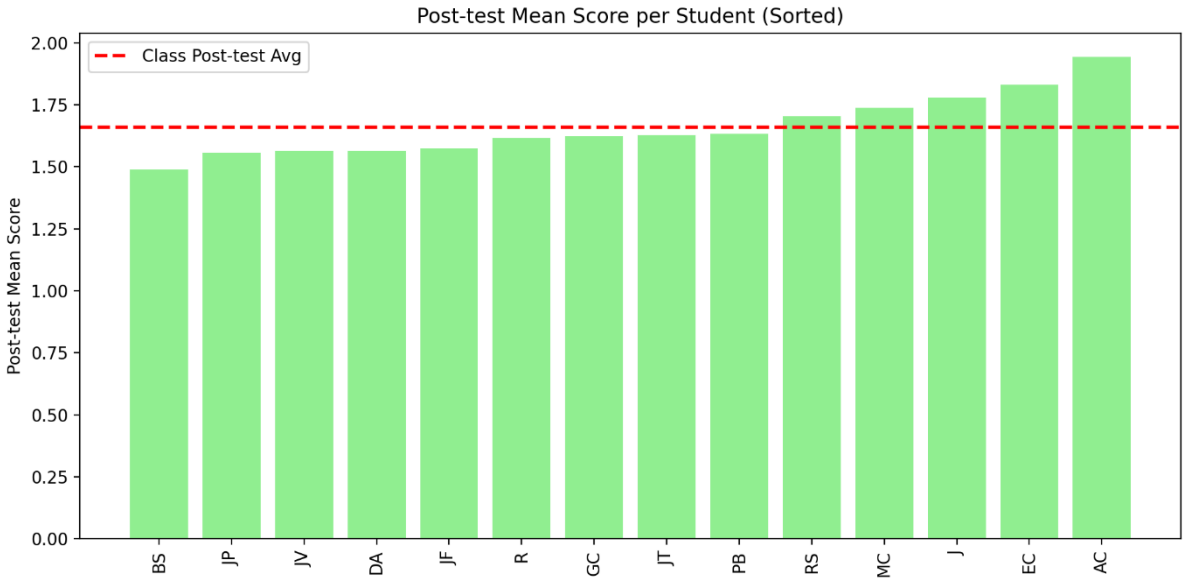

Figure 5: Post-test Mean Score per Student ordered from lowest to highest

Figure 5 shows the mean post-test score per student, ordered from lowest to highest. All students demonstrated score increases, with the class average rising to 1.64 (red dashed line). Notable gains were observed in students AC and DA.

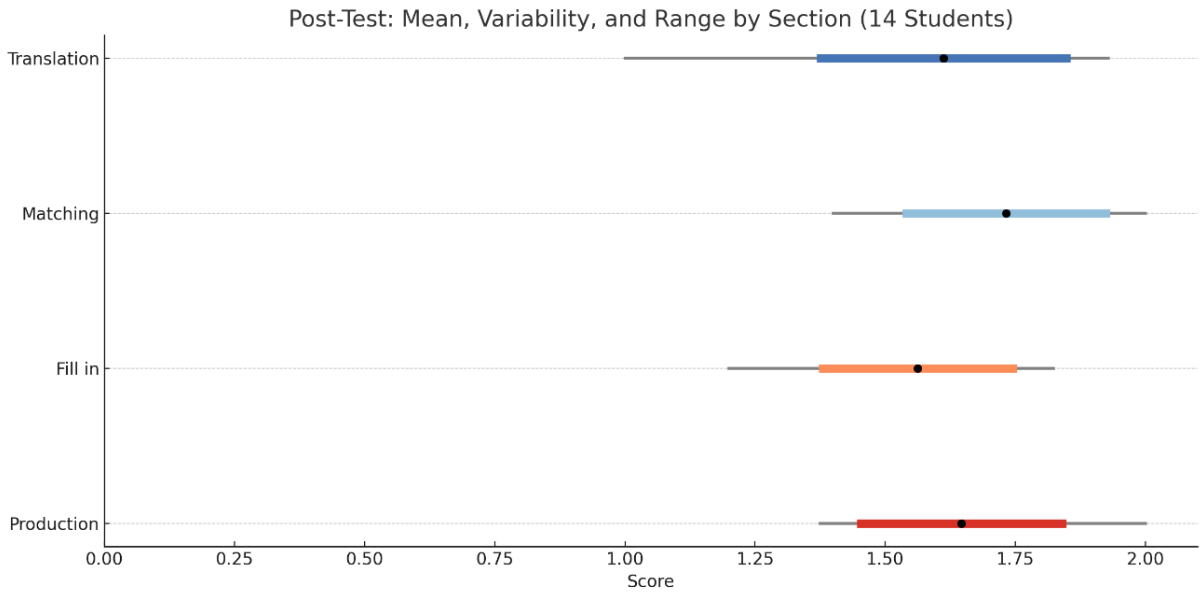

Figure 6: Post-test Response Patterns Between Sections and Students

Figure 6 depicts student response patterns across sections in the post-test. Compared to the pre-test, variability in 'fill-in' and 'production' sections decreased while average scores

increased, indicating more consistent responses.

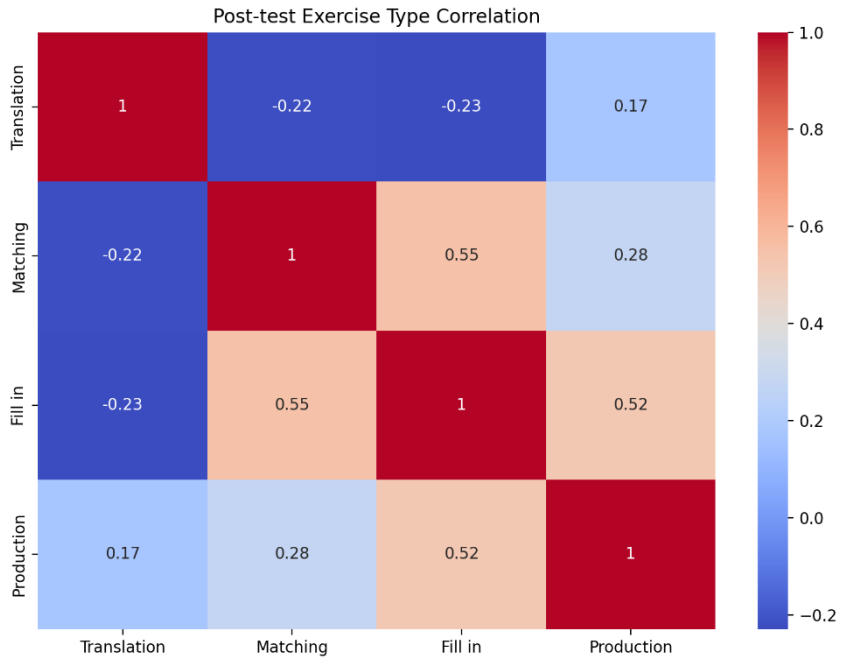

Figure 7: Post-test Correlation Heatmap Between Sections

Figure 7 provides a post-test correlation heatmap. 'Fill-in' maintains strong positive correlations with both 'matching' (r = 0.55) and 'production' (r = 0.52), whereas 'translation' continues to show minimal correlation with the other sections.

Table 2: ***Post-test Analysis: Average Score Gaps Between Exercise Types***

Sections	Mean Difference
Translation vs Matching	0,112
Translation vs Fill in	0,039
Translation vs Production	0,045
Matching vs Fill in	0,151
Matching vs Production	0,067
Fill in vs Production	0,045

Table 2 outlines average score differences between post-test sections. The widest gap remains between 'matching' and 'fill-in' (0.151), while the narrowest is between 'translation' and 'fill-in' (0.039).

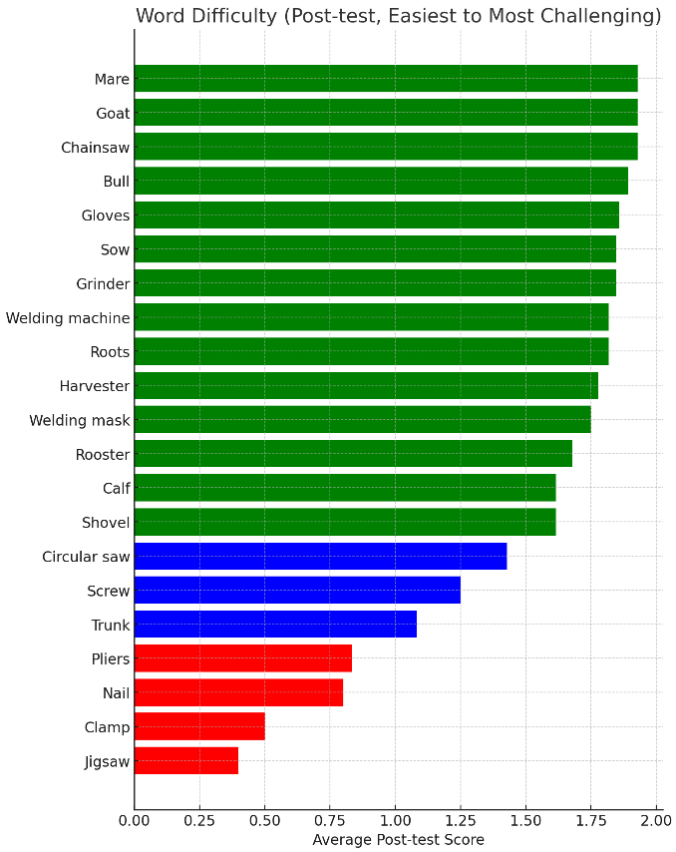

Figure 8: Word Difficulty Post-test

Figure 8 ranks word difficulty in the post-test. Though several difficult words from the pre-test improved, Jigsaw, Clamp, and Nail remained among the most challenging. Pliers emerged as a newly difficult word. Terms such as Mare, Goat, Chainsaw, and Bull remained among the easiest.

4.3.1 Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Performance

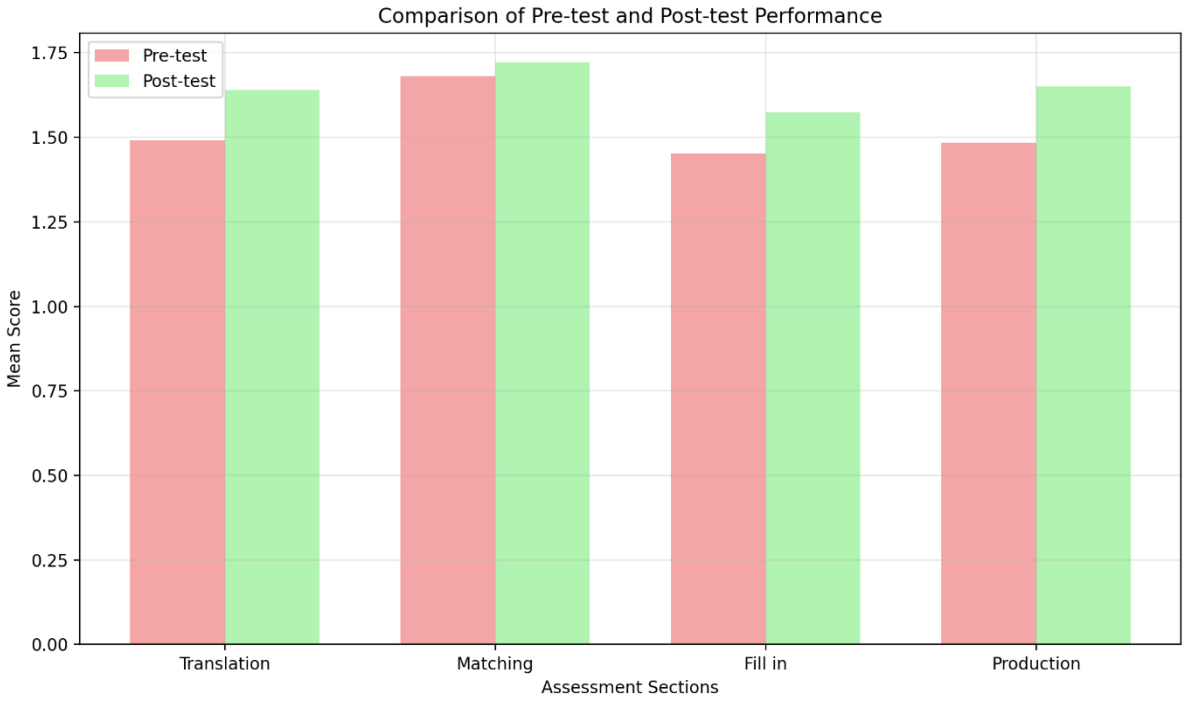

Figure 9: Exercise Type Performance Pre and Post-test

Figure 9 compares average section scores in pre- and post-tests. All exercise types showed improvement:

Translation: 1.49 → 1.64

Matching: 1.68 → 1.72

Fill-in: 1.45 → 1.57

Production: 1.48 → 1.65

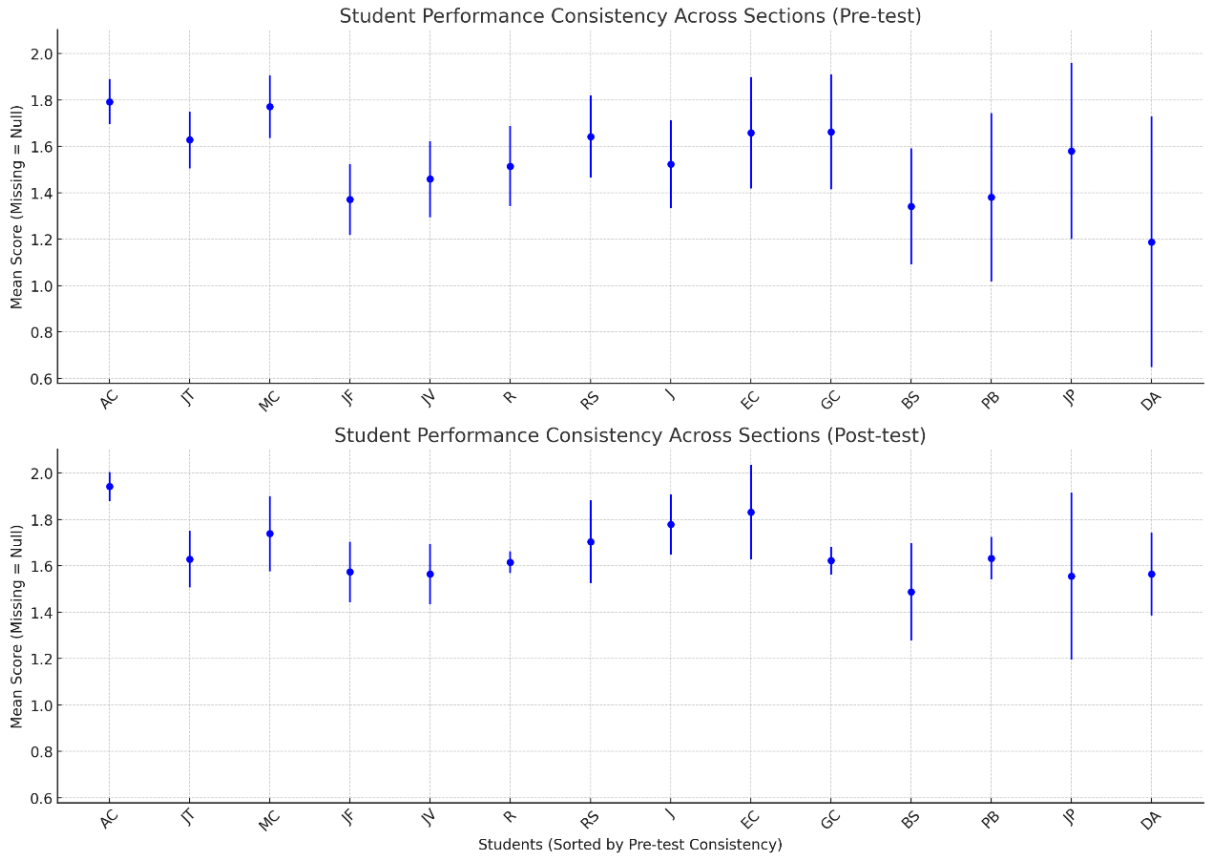

Figure 10: Student Performance Consistency Across Sections (Pre and Post-test)

Figure 10 displays the mean and variability of each student's performance across exercise types. The dots represent mean scores, while the vertical lines show the standard deviation in their performance from individual means. Shorter lines indicate a more consistent performance across all exercises.

In the pre-test, several students (e.g., DA, JP, PB) show high variability across sections, while others (e.g., AC, JT) show consistent performance.

The post-test shows reduced variability for most students, with increased uniformity in responses across sections. AC remains the most consistent performer, DA still shows variability, though reduced and JP is the most inconsistent.

4.4 Student Perceptions of the Learning Experience (Likert Scale)

To assess affective and metacognitive responses to the intervention, a Likert-scale questionnaire was administered, focusing on four key dimensions: perceived vocabulary learning, class effectiveness, self-confidence in language use, and enjoyment of the learning process. Student responses provide valuable insight into the subjective impact of the pedagogical approach adopted.

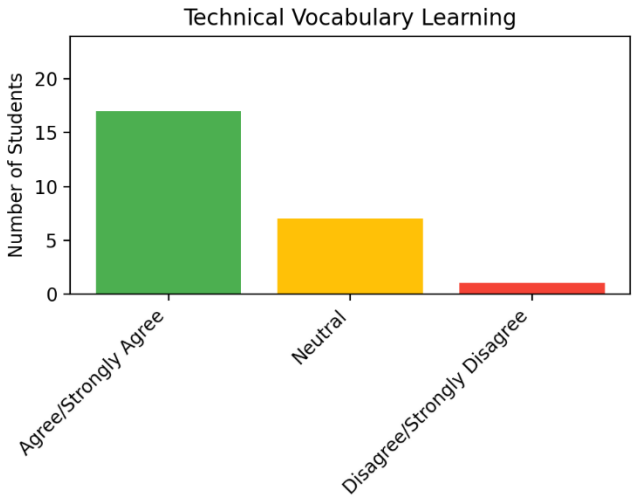

Figure 11: Technical Vocabulary Learning

(**Question:** *Les classes m'han ajudat a aprendre nous termes tècnics*)

Responses to this item indicate that 68% of students selected either “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” (ratings of 4 or 5), 28% selected “Neutral” (rating of 3), and 4% selected “Disagree” or “Strongly Disagree” (ratings of 1 or 2).

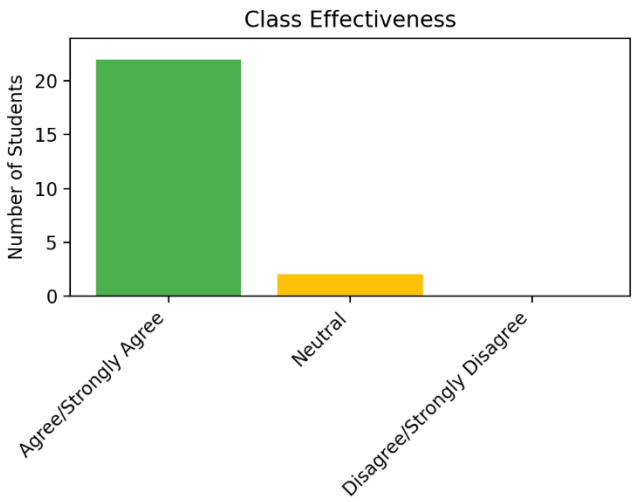

Figure 12: Class Effectiveness

*(**Question:** Aprendre vocabulari tècnic en anglès és rellevant per al meu àmbit professional)*

In this item, 88% of students responded with "Agree" or "Strongly Agree" (ratings of 4 or 5), 8% selected "Neutral," and no students selected a rating below 3.

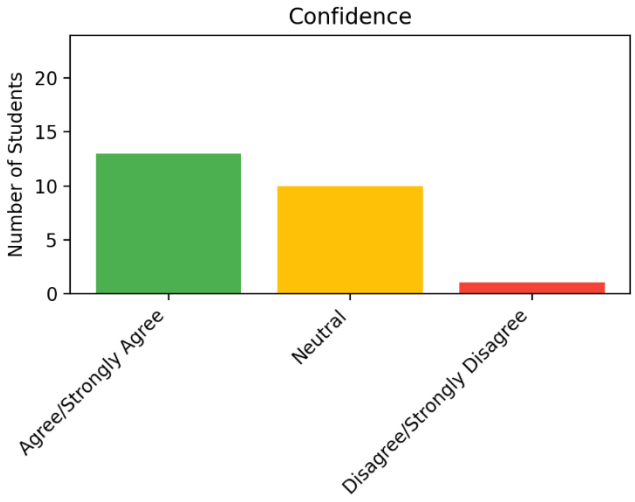

Figure 13: Confidence

(**Question:** *Em sento més segur/a utilitzant aquestes paraules en el meu àmbit de treball*)

A total of 52% of students indicated agreement or strong agreement (ratings of 4 or 5), 40% selected a neutral response, and 4% disagreed (ratings of 1 or 2).

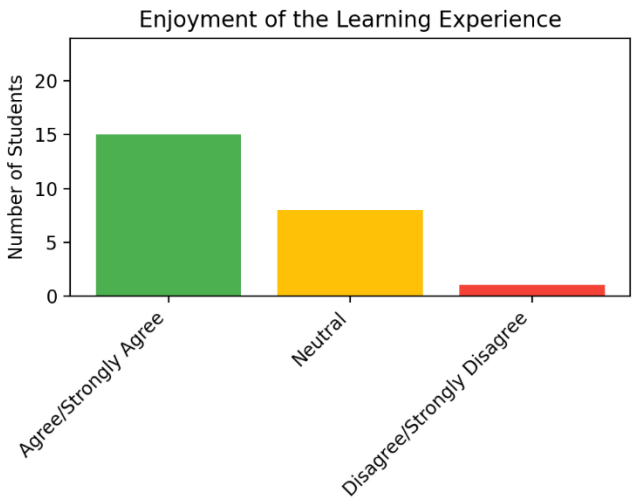

Figure 14: Enjoyment of the Learning Experience

***(Question:** He gaudit aprenent aquest vocabulari tècnic)*

In terms of enjoyment, 60% of participants selected ratings of 4 or 5, 32% selected "Neutral," and 4% selected a rating of 1 or 2.

4.5 Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses

To complement the Likert-scale data, two open-ended questions were included in the student questionnaire. These aimed to explore learner perceptions regarding the usefulness of technical vocabulary instruction and its relevance to future employment, particularly in international contexts. Responses were categorised thematically, with selected examples to illustrate the most representative viewpoints.

Question 1: "Creus que aprendre vocabulari tècnic és útil per al teu futur? Per què?"

(Do you think learning technical vocabulary is useful for your future? Why?)

The vast majority of responses were affirmative, highlighting three main themes: employability, comprehension of technical materials, and international mobility.

Theme A: Enhancing Job Prospects and Communication Skills

"Sí, és necessari per la comunicació."

"Sí, per poder treballar en altres parts del món i parlar amb altra gent."

Theme B: Understanding Technical Content and Procedures

"Sí, per poder entendre instruccions i parlar."

"Sí, per exemple el pots necessitar per entendre el manual d'instruccions."

Theme C: International Opportunities and Preparedness

"Sí, si has d'anar a l'estranger estàs més preparat i amb més portes obertes."

"Sí, ja que et permet expressar-te molt millor i amb més enteniment, i poder llegir instruccions d'ús de màquines."

Some nuanced or cautious responses also emerged:

"Sí, però espero no haver d'utilitzar gaire l'anglès en un futur."

Question 2: "Creus que aprendre aquestes paraules t'ajudarà a treballar en un altre país?"

(Do you think learning these words will help you work in another country?)

Most students expressed positive expectations about the utility of technical vocabulary in international contexts, even if not all of them planned to work abroad.

Theme A: Improved Communication Abroad

"Sí, perquè saber-ho t'ajuda a expressar-te."

"Sí, perquè serveix per poder comunicar-te bé amb la gent d'un altre país."

Theme B: Vocational Relevance and Practical Use

"Sí, perquè és important poder comunicar-te dins el teu sector laboral."

"Sí, perquè em sento més segura parlant en anglès ja que coneixeré més vocabulari relacionat amb el món forestal."

Theme C: Conditional or Limited Relevance

"Si ho necessites, sí, ja que et podries comunicar i poder treballar de millor manera."

"Sí, tot i que no vull treballar en un altre país, potser cal parlar amb el servei tècnic en anglès."

Negative or Neutral Responses

A small number of students indicated that the vocabulary would not be useful for them personally:

“No, perquè espero no treballar mai fora de Catalunya.”

“No treballaré si tot va bé a un altre país, treballaré a l’empresa familiar.”

5. Discussion

5.1 Comparative Analysis of Pre- and Post-Test Performance

The comparison of student scores before and after the intervention (*Figure 1* and *Figure 5*) shows a general improvement in overall performance. The class average increased from 1.53 to 1.64, and students such as AC (from 1.76 to 1.94) and DA (from 1.19 to 1.56) demonstrated noticeable gains. While this improvement may suggest a positive influence from the learning activities implemented during the intervention period, it is important to interpret this cautiously, as multiple factors could have contributed to the outcome.

During the six-week instructional period, students engaged in scaffolded vocabulary practice through activities such as word searches, crosswords, technical readings, and writing tasks. These were all contextualised within the students' vocational specialisations. The final task—producing an instructional video explaining the function and safety of a tool—provided an opportunity to use newly acquired vocabulary in a communicative and practical context. These activities may have supported language retention and usage, especially through repeated exposure and task-based application.

Across task types (*Figure 9*), all areas showed improvement. Matching tasks maintained the highest mean scores (pre: 1.68; post: 1.72), consistent with the nature of passive recognition. Production, on the other hand, showed the greatest increase (from 1.48 to 1.65), which may reflect improved active recall and application. Translation and fill-in tasks also improved (from 1.49 to 1.64 and 1.45 to 1.57, respectively), suggesting a general enhancement in vocabulary familiarity and functional language use. While it is not possible to attribute these changes solely

to the intervention, the structured and context-rich nature of the activities likely played a contributory role.

In addition to the increase in mean scores, a reduction in performance variability was observed in the post-test. The heatmaps comparing pre- and post-test responses across sections and students (*Figure 3* and *Figure 7*) indicate that responses in 'production' and 'fill-in' tasks became more consistent following the intervention. This suggests a more uniform engagement with these tasks across the group, and may reflect increased confidence or familiarity with technical vocabulary as used in various formats.

5.2 Task-Type Difficulty and Skill Integration

An analysis of mean score gaps (*Figure 3* shows a correlation heatmap depicting the strength of relationships between exercise types. A notable positive correlation is observed between 'fill-in' and 'production' (r = 0.65), while 'translation' displays weak or negative correlations, particularly with 'matching' (r = -0.33). Table 1 and *Table 2*) highlights notable patterns in how students approached different exercise types. In the pre-test (*Figure 3* shows a correlation heatmap depicting the strength of relationships between exercise types. A notable positive correlation is observed between 'fill-in' and 'production' (r = 0.65), while 'translation' displays weak or negative correlations, particularly with 'matching' (r = -0.33). Table 1), the largest gap was between matching and fill-in tasks (0.242), suggesting that students generally found passive recognition tasks significantly easier than active recall tasks. Similarly, the gap between matching and production (0.203) reinforces the idea that more cognitively demanding tasks presented greater difficulty.

The smallest differences were between translation and fill-in (0.019) and between fill-in and production (0.039), indicating similar difficulty levels for these active and semi-productive tasks. This consistency suggests that such exercises tap into comparable language processing skills, perhaps due to their reliance on vocabulary recall, grammatical construction, and context-based understanding.

Post-test results (*Table 2*) mirror and reinforce these patterns. The matching vs fill-in gap, though reduced to 0.151, remains the widest, underscoring the continued relative ease of recognition tasks. Once again, translation vs fill-in (0.039) and fill-in vs production (0.045) show minimal difference, indicating these productive activities remained closely aligned in terms of challenge. The gap between matching and production narrowed substantially to 0.067, suggesting increasing alignment in performance across different task types.

While causality cannot be definitively established, the narrowing of these gaps may reflect increased familiarity with the vocabulary and tasks, potentially influenced by the structured, contextual activities used during the intervention.

5.3 Correlation Patterns

Figure 3 and *Figure 7* (correlation heatmaps) further support the interpretation of skill integration. In the post-test, the strongest positive correlation emerged between fill-in and production (r = 0.65), while fill-in also correlated well with matching (r = 0.55) and production (r = 0.52). Translation, however, continued to show weak or negative correlations with other task types, particularly with matching (r = -0.33), indicating that it taps into a distinct set of language skills.

It is important to distinguish the kind of information shown by the correlation *heatmaps* from the data presented in *Figure 3* shows a correlation heatmap depicting the strength of relationships between exercise types. A notable positive correlation is observed between 'fill-in' and 'production' (r = 0.65), while 'translation' displays weak or negative correlations, particularly with 'matching' (r = -0.33). Table 1 and *Table 2*. While the tables illustrate average score gaps between task types (*how much easier or harder one task was than another*), the *heatmaps* reflect performance alignment (*how similarly students performed across different tasks*). In other words, Tables 1 and 2 help us say that "*students found matching much easier than production*," whereas the *heatmaps* allow us to observe that "*students who did well in production also tended to do well in fill-in.*" These two perspectives offer complementary insights into both task difficulty and skill overlap.

5.4 Individual Performance Consistency

Figures 2 and 6 depict the variability in student responses across task types. The pre-test (*Figure* 2) showed high variability in production, with several students displaying significant inconsistency. In the post-test (*Figure 6*), this variability reduced markedly in both production and fill-in tasks, indicating more stable performance.

Figure 10 shows individual consistency, with vertical lines indicating standard deviation. Students like AC maintained high consistency throughout, while students like JP showed decreased variability post-test. The intervention, particularly through multimodal and collaborative activities like video scripting and filming, contributed to this greater uniformity across exercises.

5.5 Vocabulary Item Difficulty and Lexical Development

Figure 4 and Figure 8 display pre- and post-test rankings of vocabulary item difficulty. Words such as Clamp, Nail, Jigsaw, Screw, and Trunk were the most challenging pre-intervention. Although they remained difficult, their post-test scores improved. Meanwhile, words like Mare, Goat, Chainsaw, and Bull consistently appeared among the easiest items in both pre- and post-tests. This may indicate that students were already familiar with these terms prior to the intervention.

The largest learning gains occurred in mid-to-low performing vocabulary items such as Sow and Grinder, suggesting that the intervention was particularly effective for unfamiliar or complex terms. Items with initially high scores (e.g., Calf, Shovel) displayed ceiling effects, while persistent difficulty with words like Screw indicates a need for additional reinforcement through context-rich repetition.

These patterns underscore the effectiveness of targeted vocabulary instruction in facilitating the acquisition of unfamiliar and technical terms.

5.6 Student Perceptions: Affective and Metacognitive Dimensions

Student feedback, presented in Figures 11 to 14, adds a qualitative dimension to the quantitative findings. Regarding the usefulness of learning technical vocabulary (Figure 9), 68% of students

expressed agreement, though 28% remained neutral, suggesting some ambivalence or variability in personal relevance or perceived gains. A strong consensus was evident concerning the effectiveness of the course (Figure 12), with 88% agreeing or strongly agreeing and no students reporting dissatisfaction. These results reflect positively on the alignment of the instructional content with students' vocational needs.

Confidence gains were more modest (Figure 13), with just over half (52%) reporting increased confidence and 40% remaining neutral. This suggests that while knowledge acquisition was evident, affective outcomes such as self-efficacy may require more prolonged or targeted support. Lastly, enjoyment levels were generally high (Figure 14), with 60% agreeing they enjoyed the learning process, reinforcing the overall positive reception of ESP-TBL methodology, which students found both engaging and relevant to their learning needs.

In addition to the Likert-scale data, open-ended responses further support the relevance and perceived value of technical vocabulary instruction. Many students highlighted the importance of learning field-specific English for understanding manuals, safety instructions, and documentation, as well as for communicating with international colleagues. Even students not intending to work abroad acknowledged that English is frequently encountered in vocational contexts through online tutorials, service communications, or equipment labelling. Conversely, the few negative or indifferent responses were associated with students whose professional goals are exclusively local or rooted in family businesses, rather than reflecting a rejection of the instruction itself. These qualitative insights reinforce the value of incorporating English for Specific Purposes (ESP) into vocational programmes and demonstrate that learners regard such instruction as meaningful, empowering, and practically applicable.

5.7 Pedagogical Implications

These findings offer several implications for curriculum design in vocational English contexts. First, the improvement in productive tasks and the reduced gap between recognition and production exercises (Tables 1 and 2) suggest that scaffolded vocabulary instruction—through

activities like writing tasks, readings, and practical output—can help bridge passive and active skills. This is further supported by the increased alignment observed in productive-task correlations (Figures 3 and 7).

Second, the post-test consistency across students and task types (Figures 2, 6, and 10) highlights the value of balanced assessment and instruction that develop both recognition and production skills. The variety of integrated tasks—particularly the final video production—appears to support more stable, cross-task performance.

Third, the persistence of difficulty with certain vocabulary items (Figures 4 and 8) points to the need for more frequent recycling and multimodal reinforcement of challenging terms. Instructional strategies should consider how technical terms are revisited and contextualised to strengthen retention.

Finally, student feedback (Figures 11–14) reinforces the positive reception of the ESP-TBL methodology, which students found engaging and applicable to their vocational interests. At the same time, the variation in responses related to confidence suggests the need for more personalised support to help students internalise their progress and build self-assurance in using technical English.

6. Conclusions

This study has examined the impact of teaching context-specific technical vocabulary through an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Task-Based Learning (TBL) approach within agricultural and forestry vocational education. The findings offer compelling support for the core premises outlined in the literature review, particularly concerning the role of relevance, motivation, and strategic vocabulary instruction in enhancing learner engagement and language retention.

The results reinforce the argument put forth by Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris (2004) that learners are more likely to invest effort in tasks that are directly connected to their goals and interests. Students in this study demonstrated improved performance in productive vocabulary tasks and reported high levels of satisfaction with the learning experience, especially when

engaged in activities that simulated real-world applications—such as the production of instructional videos. This confirms the potential of TBL to foster meaningful engagement, as previously suggested by Sarani and Sahebi (2012) and Dinh and Hoang (2022a), who found that task-based approaches enhance creativity and learner motivation more effectively than traditional methods.

These findings also align with Gardner's (2010b) socio-educational model, in which both integrative and instrumental motivation play a central role in second language acquisition. By focusing on technical vocabulary relevant to students' vocational fields, the intervention strengthened instrumental motivation by linking language learning directly to future employment contexts. At the same time, enjoyment and perceived usefulness of the learning process, reported by the majority of students, point to the activation of positive affective dimensions that support Gardner's theory of motivated learning behaviour.

The vocabulary gains observed—especially in more challenging productive tasks—underscore the importance of strategic vocabulary instruction highlighted by Skarpaas and Rødnes (2022). Their research advocates for aligning vocabulary content with students' specific professional domains, which this intervention effectively achieved. Furthermore, the improved performance across task types confirms the assertion by Gu (2003) that vocabulary acquisition is most effective when it involves repeated, strategic, and cognitively engaging learning opportunities. The persistence of difficulty with some terms suggests, as Gu also noted, that metacognitive strategies and iterative reinforcement are necessary for full lexical integration.

Students' positive perceptions of the course, including confidence and enjoyment, also reflect Brown's (2009) findings regarding the significance of aligning instructional practices with student expectations. The intervention was designed to reduce the disconnect often found between teacher-led content and student needs, a gap identified by Brown as detrimental to engagement and satisfaction. Similarly, the emphasis on authentic materials and meaningful feedback echoes the recommendations of Tomlinson (2010), who advocates for materials development that is

responsive to learners' real-life needs and contexts.

While the study's limited sample size and scope necessitate cautious generalisation, the results contribute to a growing body of evidence supporting ESP and TBL methodologies in vocational education. In line with the work of Ronaldo (2016) and Park (2024), this study confirms that context-specific, authentic materials, when appropriately scaffolded, enhance learner motivation and lexical competence in ways that generic instruction often fails to achieve.

In sum, the intervention has demonstrated that integrating technical vocabulary instruction within task-based, authentic learning experiences can significantly benefit vocational students' engagement, retention, and perceived value of English language learning. These outcomes validate the theoretical perspectives reviewed and suggest a promising path for designing future curricula that are both linguistically effective and professionally relevant. Further research with a bigger sample of students is recommended to explore the long-term impact of such approaches and their scalability across diverse vocational disciplines.

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8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix I: Learning Situation

Week 1: Vocabulary Building and Exploration (3 Hours)

Objectives:

1. Understand the structure of demonstration videos.
2. Build and practice using technical vocabulary.
3. Develop listening and comprehension skills.

Activities:

1. **Flashcard Creation (1 Hour)**
   - Students work in pairs to create vocabulary flashcards that include English terms, Catalan translations, definitions, example sentences, and illustrations.
   - Pronunciation practice using online resources (e.g., Cambridge Dictionary).
   - Final output: A PowerPoint presentation containing flashcards with recorded pronunciations.
2. **Video Example Analysis (1 Hour)**
   - Students watch and analyze instructional safety videos related to tool use.
   - Activities include discussion, vocabulary matching, comprehension questions, and role-playing scenarios simulating safe tool use.
3. **Instruction Ordering and Summarization (1 Hour)**
   - Reordering disorganized steps for using electric tools.

- Summarizing instructions concisely and sharing them with the class.
- Wordwall activity where students create and test an interactive matching game on sequencing tool usage steps.

Week 2: Research and Scriptwriting (3 Hours)

Objectives:

1. Conduct research on tool use and safety.
2. Write structured instructional scripts using clear, technical English.

Activities:

4. **Tool-Specific Research (1 Hour)**
    - In groups, students research assigned tools (e.g., welding machine, circular saw, chainsaw) focusing on their purpose, key safety precautions, and common uses.
    - Findings are summarized and shared with the class.
5. **Script Writing Workshop (2 Hours)**
    - Students draft scripts following a structured format:
        - Introduction (tool overview and primary use).
        - Demonstration (step-by-step guide on tool operation).
        - Safety Emphasis (protective measures and precautions).
        - Conclusion (summary and final safety reminders).
    - Peer feedback and revision process.

Week 3: Practice and Filming (3 Hours)

Objectives:

1. Deliver clear verbal instructions while handling tools.
2. Record structured instructional videos.

Activities:

6. **Tool Handling and Rehearsals (1 Hour)**
    - Supervised practice using tools.
    - Rehearsal of verbal instructions while demonstrating tool use.
    - Recording short practice clips for self-assessment.
7. **Video Production (2 Hours)**
    - Students film their instructional videos following their scripts.
    - Videos include visual aids like subtitles or safety icons.

Week 4: Presentation and Reflection (3 Hours)

Objectives:

1. Evaluate the clarity and effectiveness of instructions.
2. Reflect on learning outcomes and areas for improvement.

Activities:

8. **Video Presentations (2 Hours)**
    - Groups present their videos to the class.
    - Peer assessment using a checklist evaluating clarity, safety measures, and language use.
9. **Reflection and Self-Assessment (1 Hour)**
    - Students complete a reflection sheet analyzing their learning progress.
    - Group discussion on strengths, challenges, and improvements for future tasks.

Evaluation and Assessment

Students are assessed through:

- **Flashcard Evaluation (10 points):** Completeness, accuracy, pronunciation, presentation, and creativity.
- **Wordwall Activity Evaluation (10 points):** Correct sequencing, clarity, use of transition words, and matching accuracy.
- **Video Evaluation Rubric (10 points):** Clarity of instructions, safety measures, language accuracy, organization, creativity, and teamwork.
- **Self-Assessment and Peer Feedback Forms:** Reflection on vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation confidence, and instructional effectiveness.

Criteria	Excellent (4 pts)	Good (3 pts)	Satisfactory (2 pts)	Needs Improvement (1 pt)	Video 1	Video 2	Video 3	Video 4	Video 5	Video 6	Video 7
Introduction	Clearly states the tool, its purpose, and main use.	Mentions the tool and purpose but lacks detail.	Briefly introduces the tool but not clearly.	No clear introduction.							
Demonstration	Shows steps clearly and explains well.	Steps are mostly clear, but some details are missing.	Steps are not very clear or complete.	Poor or missing demonstration.							
Safety Tips	Clearly explains and shows safety measures.	Mentions safety but misses some key points.	Safety information is unclear or incomplete.	No safety explanation.							
Clarity & Video Quality	Speaker is clear, and video/audio are good.	Mostly clear, with minor issues.	Some parts are unclear or hard to hear/see.	Poor video or hard to understand.							
Conclusion	Summarizes key points well and ends properly.	Has a conclusion but could be stronger.	Conclusion is weak or missing key points.	No proper conclusion.							

Total Score per Video: | | | | | | | |

Video 1:

Strengths of the video: _

Areas for improvement: _____

Video 2:

Strengths of the video: _

Areas for improvement: _____

Video 3:

Strengths of the video: _

Areas for improvement: _____

Video 4:

Strengths of the video: _

Areas for improvement: _____

Activity Reflection:

1. How useful was this activity in helping you understand how to use workshop tools safely?

2. What did you learn from making or evaluating these videos?

3. Did you learn any new words related to workshop tools and safety? List some:

4. How could this activity be better next time?

8.2 Appendix II: Vocabulary test (Pre and Post)

Translate the following words from Catalan/Spanish to English:

1. Euga → _____
2. Serra circular → _____
3. Serra de calar → _____
4. Amoladora → _____
5. Màquina de soldar → _____
6. Cabra → _____
7. Truja → _____
8. Arrels → _____
9. Serjant → _____
10. Pala → _____
11. Tronc → _____
12. Clau → _____
13. Cargol → _____
14. Gall → _____
15. Segadora → _____
16. Bou → _____
17. Vedell → _____
18. Guants → _____
19. Alicates → _____
20. Careta de soldar → _____

Match each term to its corresponding Catalan term

English	Catalan
Mare	a) Serra circular
Circular saw	b) Cabra
Jigsaw	c) Careta de soldar
Grinder	d) Euga
Welding machine	e) Gall
Goat	f) Caladora
Sow	g) Màquina de soldar
Roots	h) Pala
Clamp	i) Bou
Shovel	j) Alicates
Canopy	k) Serjant
Nail	l) Clau
Screw	m) Cargol
Rooster	n) Vedell
Harvester	o) Segadora
Bull	p) Truja
Calf	q) Arrels
Brush cutter	r) Capçada
Welding mask	s) Amoladora
Pliers	t) Desbrossadora

Which tool would you use for each of these activities?

1. Cutting through thick branches and logs:
2. Cutting straight lines in wood or metal sheets:
3. Grinding, cutting, and polishing hard materials:
4. Securing objects firmly in place:
5. Digging and moving soil or sand:
6. Grip, bend, or cut wires and materials:

Which animal would you associate with each description?

7. This animal provides milk and is known for its ability to climb rocks easily:
8. A female pig, often kept for breeding purposes:
9. A female horse, usually used for riding or work:
10. This bird is known for waking everyone up with its crowing at sunrise:
11. A strong male used for breeding or work in the fields:
12. A young animal that stays close to its mother and is raised for meat or dairy:

Complete the sentences using the correct tool from the list.

Word bank:

Mare, Circular saw, Jigsaw, Grinder, Welding machine, Goat, Sow, Roots, Clamp, Shovel, Canopy, Nail, Screw, Rooster, Harvester, Bull, Calf, Brush cutter, Welding mask, Pliers

1. To cut thick wooden boards, you need a _____.
2. When welding, always wear a _____ to protect your eyes.
3. A _____ is useful for cutting curves in wood.
4. Farmers use a _____ to collect crops.
5. The gardener used a _____ to cut tall grass and weeds.
6. A _____ helps to polish and cut metal.
7. To dig a hole for planting, use a _____.
8. The carpenter hammered a _____ into the wood.
9. A _____ holds two pieces of wood together.
10. The _____ of the tree gives shade.
11. A young cow is called a _____.
12. A female horse is a _____.
13. The _____ of a tree grow underground.
14. A female pig is called a _____.
15. The farmer used a _____ to fix the fence.
16. A _____ wakes everyone up in the morning.
17. A strong male cow is a _____.
18. A _____ climbs rocks and eats leaves.
19. To hold small objects, use _____.
20. A _____ joins metal parts together

Qüestionari d'Enquesta i Comentaris

1. Quantes d'aquestes paraules ja coneixies abans d'aquesta classe d'anglès?

□ : No en coneixia cap.

□ : En coneixia entre 1 i 5.

□ : En coneixia de 5 a 10.

□ : En coneixia més de 10.

2. Creus que aprendre vocabulari tècnic en anglès és útil per al teu futur? Per què?
(Escriu una resposta breu)

3. En quines situacions creus que podries necessitar utilitzar aquestes paraules en anglès?
a) Treballant en una empresa internacional
b) Veient vídeos/tutorials tècnics en línia
c) Parlant amb professionals d'altres països
d) Llegint manuals o instruccions de maquinària
e) Altres: _____

4. Creus que aprendre aquestes paraules t'ajudarà a treballar en un altre país?

✓ **Sí, perquè...**

✗ **No, perquè...**

Valora les següents afirmacions en una escala de **1 (Totalment en desacord) a 5 (Totalment d'acord).**

Afirmació	1 (Totalment en desacord)	2 En desacord)	3 (Neutral)	4 (D'acord)	5 (Totalment d'acord)
Aprendre vocabulari tècnic en Anglès és rellevant per al meu àmbit professional.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Les classes m'han ajudat a aprendre nous termes tècnics.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Em sento més segur/a utilitzant aquestes paraules en el meu àmbit de treball.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
He gaudit aprenent aquest vocabulari tècnic.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Quina estratègia has utilitzat per intentar endevinar el significat de les paraules que no coneixies?

(Pots triar més d'una opció)

☐ **Context** (He intentat entendre-ho a partir de la frase)
☐ **Imaginació** (He fet una suposició basada en el que ja sé)
☐ **Semblança amb la paraula en català** (Semblava familiar)
☐ **Coneixia una part de la paraula** (N'he reconegut una part)
☐ **Altres:** _____