

# LEXICAL AVAILABILITY OF EFL LEARNERS AT THE END OF SPANISH SECONDARY EDUCATION: THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE PROGRAM AND PROMPT

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## *Abstract*

The present paper looks at lexical availability in two teaching programmes (EOI and EFL) in the last year of Spanish secondary education (4<sup>th</sup> ESO). Our main aim is to ascertain whether there are quantitative and qualitative differences in the available lexicon of the two groups of informants. Thus, we have analysed the words retrieved by the two groups in a lexical availability task comprising three traditional and three new prompts (*centros de interés*). Results show that there are significant quantitative differences between the two groups of informants, in favour of the EOI group. However, we have not found qualitative differences in the first words retrieved by the two groups of informants in response to each prompt in terms of internal frequency, semantic category and word type. Nevertheless, there are important qualitative differences between the traditional and the new prompts as far as semantic category and word type are concerned.

## *Resumen*

El presente artículo analiza la disponibilidad léxica en dos programas de enseñanza (EOI y EFL) en el último curso de educación secundaria (4<sup>th</sup> ESO). Nuestro objetivo es averiguar si existen diferencias cuantitativas y cualitativas en el léxico disponible de los dos grupos de informantes. Para ello, hemos analizado las palabras vertidas por cada grupo en una prueba de disponibilidad léxica compuesta por tres centros de interés tradicionales y tres nuevos. Los resultados muestran que hay diferencias cuantitativas significativas entre los dos grupos, a favor del grupo EOI. Sin embargo, no hemos encontrado diferencias cualitativas en las primeras palabras vertidas por los dos grupos de informantes en respuesta a cada centro de interés en términos de frecuencia interna, categoría semántica y tipo de palabra. No obstante, hay importantes diferencias cualitativas entre los centros de interés tradicionales y los nuevos en lo que concierne a la clase y tipo de palabra vertida.

*Keywords:* Lexical availability, EOI, EFL, English in secondary education.

*Palabras clave:* Disponibilidad léxica, EOI, EFL, Inglés en educación secundaria.

## INTRODUCTION

This paper looks at the English lexical availability of 10<sup>th</sup> grade Spanish learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) in two language programs in the same high school: Official Language School (E.O.I) EFL program versus the regular EFL program. The E.O.I programme where the present study took place was implemented in the region for the first time in 2007 as a collaborative programme between the Official Language School (E.O.I) in the capital city and secondary schools in the region. As in other parts of Spain, this program is addressed to secondary school students from 9<sup>th</sup> year of secondary education to the last year of baccalaureate (12<sup>th</sup> year). Our aim is to ascertain whether there are differences or similarities in a lexical availability task accomplished by the two groups. Lexical availability tasks are efficient instruments to assess the available lexicon of learners.

The words retrieved in lexical availability tasks make up the available lexicons for specific vocabulary domains; they may not be the most frequent in the language but they are ready to be used in specific situations (Dimitrijevi 1969). Lexical availability research has a long-standing tradition in Spanish as first language, where it has aimed at identifying the lexicons of speakers from Spanish speaking countries (see [www.dispoplex.es](http://www.dispoplex.es)). Since the eighties, lexical availability has given rise to an important body of research in Spanish as second language and foreign language (L2) mainly focused on university students (e.g Carcedo 1998; Hernández, Izura and Tomé 2014; Samper 2002, 2014). In comparison, lexical availability studies in English as a first or second language have been just testimonial only represented by the research of Dimitrijevi (1969) in Scotland and that of Bayle Victory (1972) on English and Spanish bilinguals in Texas in the United States. This last line of research has been recently addressed by Moreno and Fernández (2003, 2012); and Sancho Sánchez (2006) who have focused on the comparison of the lexical availability of bilinguals of English and Spanish in immersion contexts in the United States. In the last five years, lexical availability studies have also appeared in English as a foreign language (L2), but in contrast to Spanish L2, most have been carried out in primary and lower secondary education schools, where English is a compulsory subject among other School curricula subjects. However, although the target languages and the learning contexts differ, L2 Spanish and L2 English lexical availability studies

share methodological aspects regarding the data collection instruments and data analysis that bestow these studies with a high degree of external validity.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides an account of the research that has addressed variables closely related to the present study. Section 3 presents the results for the research questions addressed in our investigation. Finally, Sections 4 and 5 are devoted to the discussion and the summary of the main findings.

## BACKGROUND

There are varying factors that affect L2 acquisition. Traditionally they have been classified into personal or individual learning variables such as age or language proficiency and instructional variables such as method, program, course or task. Each of these factors has given rise to numerous publications in the field of second language acquisition but considerably less in L2 lexical availability research. Within this context, the personal factors that have received some attention have been age, gender, motivation, and ethnicity (e.g. Jiménez Catalán, Agustín LLach, Fernández Fontecha and Canga Alonso 2014; Jiménez Berrio 2013; Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba 2009a; Fernández 2010). In comparison, the attention received by instructional factors has been scarce with only a few studies devoted to the study of course level or type of instruction. Owing to their relevance for the present study, a summary of studies on the effect of course, prompt and type of instruction is included in the following paragraphs.

Course level in primary and secondary education is intrinsically linked to age. It is not possible to separate the one from the other as each course usually corresponds to a specific age range. In this line, Carcedo (1998; 1999a,b; 2000) looked at Finnish students' lexical availability in Spanish as a foreign language at four different course levels: 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> secondary of secondary education and 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year of university in the Spanish language degree. Among his results, the author observed a higher number of responses for 'Food and Drink' as well as the existence of similarities concerning most and least productive prompts in the four courses. In other words: not all prompts showed the same retrieval of words or lexical units. Whereas some prompts ('Food and drink', 'The city, 'Animals', 'Clothes') turned out to be more productive throughout the courses, others showed a lower increase ('Gardening and farming', 'The kitchen and its utensils', 'Lighting, heating and means of airing places', 'School, furniture and materials', 'Objects placed on the table at meals', 'Furniture (house)'). Hence, Carcedo's (1999) findings demonstrated an unequal

growth in learners' lexical availability depending on the prompt. A similar result was attained by López González (2014) with Polish secondary school students SFL learners and by Jiménez and Fitzpatrick (2014) with Spanish secondary school students EFL learners at 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. These studies, conducted in three different countries (Finland, Poland and Spain), indicated that the increase observed in lexical units in the different courses did not occur in all prompts.

The variable "type of instruction" has given rise to a promising line of research in L2 lexical availability studies. So far it has focused either on the study of the effect of the type of instruction or on the language program. Among the former, to our knowledge, the first study was conducted by Germany and Cartes (2000), who looked at the relationship between the type of school (bilingual, private, and public school) in Chilean secondary school EFL learners' lexical availability. This study was based on the analysis of three prompts: 'Food and drink', 'Body parts' and 'House'. The findings showed that students in bilingual schools over performed the students in the two other types of schools. The effect of type of instruction was also addressed by Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009b) in Spain, however, their study presented three differences in comparison to the Chilean study. In the first place, they compared learners' lexical availability in a Content and Language Integrated Instruction (CLIL) situation versus the regular English as a subject situation. Secondly, the course level and age differed as they focused on EFL learners in sixth of primary education. Thirdly, their study included fifteen prompts rather than three prompts. Their results were totally different to those of Germany and Cartes (2000) that proved more production of lexical items by EFL secondary students in bilingual schools. Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba's (2009) results indicated a higher number of words retrieved by the regular EFL group than the CLIL group in 12 out of fifteen prompts, among them, 'Food and drink', 'Body parts' and 'House', prompts included in the above studies.

Regarding language program, López González (2014) analysed the available lexicons of SFL learners in six Polish bilingual schools in two instructional programmes: Year Zero (one-year intensive SFL course) and Middle School (three-year extensive course). The purpose was to determine which one of the two language programs correlated with better results in a lexical availability task. According to his data, the students attending the intensive one-year course program retrieved more words, which could be interpreted as the positive effect of the intensive program compared to the extensive program.

Despite the relevance of these findings more studies are required in primary and secondary school. Within the latter, it is particularly necessary the study of EFL learners' language competence in E.O.I programs compared to regular programs coexisting in many secondary schools in Spain. The scarce research has focused on adult EFL learners at E.O.I schools rather than EFL learners at E.O.I programs in secondary schools (Garín Martínez 2007, Canga Alonso and Fernández Fontecha

2014). The present study seeks to contribute to narrowing this gap by exploring lexical availability of EFL learners at an E.O.I program and at the regular program, both in the same high school. This is an exploratory study in which we set out to provide answers to the following research questions:

- 1) Will there be quantitative differences in the words retrieved by EFL learners at the E.O.I program and at the English regular program at the same high school?
- 2) Will there be qualitative differences in the words retrieved by the two groups in terms of internal frequency, semantic category and word type?
- 3) Will the word used as a stimulus in the lexical availability task have an effect on EFL learners' lexical output?

## METHOD

Our *sample* comprised 58 EFL learners at 10<sup>th</sup> form, the last year of Spanish Compulsory education (4th ESO). All students came from a high school located in a small town in the North of Spain. Out of the total sample, 39 (25 males and 14 females) students were enrolled in the EFL regular programme, whereas 19 students (5 males and 14 females) were enrolled in the English collaborative programme between the school and the Official Language School (E.O.I) of the capital city of the region, approximately twenty kilometres distance from the town. For the sake of clarity we will refer to the EFL learners under the E.O.I program as the E.O.I group, and to the EFL learners in the regular group as the EFL group. Both programs share the following features: (i) equal number of hours of instruction (1,042 hours at 10<sup>th</sup> grade, accumulated from 1<sup>st</sup> of primary education to 10<sup>th</sup> grade in secondary education); (ii) equal status of English, in both cases it is a subject, among other school subjects; (iii) extensive teaching distributed into four periods of fifty minutes per week; (iv) similar organization concerning syllabuses, textbooks, exams and marks on the basis of learners' scores on tests on the four language components (reading, listening, speaking and writing). However, there are differences between the two groups. First, the students enrolled in the E.O.I programme follow an advanced version of the textbook used by the EFL group. Second, E.O.I students receive the hours of instruction entirely in English, whereas the other group combines Spanish and English. And third, the students of the E.O.I programme are trained to face the E.O.I examination in order to achieve the A2 level certificate at the end of compulsory secondary education (10th year) and B1 certificate at the end of baccalaureate (12 year).

As *data collection instruments* we used a lexical availability task consisting of six prompts: ‘Animals’, ‘Food and drink’, ‘Clothes’, ‘Friendship’, ‘Happy’ and ‘Give up’. Our selection of prompts responded to the need of having a framework for comparing and exploring the effect of the type of prompt. Many researchers (e.g. Dimitrijević 1969, Jiménez Catalán and Fitzpatrick 2014; and Paredes 2014) have noted that the word category of the prompt has an effect on word retrieval (nouns tend to retrieve nouns) and most of lexical availability studies have reported the predominance of concrete nouns in learners’ responses. Therefore, by including one abstract noun, an adjective and a phrasal verb in our study we expected to find more word classes in learners’ responses.

Data collection took place within class time. Students were asked to write as many words as they could think of in response to each of the prompts, presented one by one. The time given was two minutes per prompt as controlled by a timer. Students were not allowed to respond to the next prompt until the time limit run out.

The two groups were also asked to complete a background questionnaire aimed at eliciting information from learners’ linguistic and extra linguistic variables such as sex, nationality, mother tongue, English previous experience, the reason why they enrolled in the E.O.I or in the regular programme, and the marks attained in English the previous year (9<sup>th</sup> year). However, owing to space constrains, here we only focus on the variable language teaching program.

Once the data collection was accomplished, we moved on the edition of learners’ word responses and to their codification and that of the variables included in the questionnaire. Regarding the lexical availability task, we applied Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba’s (2009) criteria in the edition of the data. Basically, these were as follows: (i) correction of spelling errors; (ii) counting repeated words only once; (iii) discarding Spanish words; (iv) hyphening lexical units; (v) discarding proper names with similar spelling in English and Spanish such as Paris or Portugal. The edited responses per prompt and per student were then introduced into an Excel file in order to run quantitative analyses. The means obtained by the two groups in the whole lexical availability task as well as for each prompt were submitted to an inferential test (t-test) as to check for the significance of the results. As data triangulation, we conducted a qualitative study on the first word responses retrieved by prompt and group. This analysis looked at internal word frequency, word semantic category, and word type. In order to identify the frequency of first word responses we used *Wordsmith Tools* version 6. This text analyser provided us with the number and the percentage of occurrences of first word responses, as well as the number and percentage of learners who retrieved each response.

## RESULTS

Table 1 summarizes the total and means of words retrieved by each group in the six prompts together with the t-test values. As can be observed, the average number of words retrieved by the E.O.I group was significantly higher than the EFL group in all prompts. However, it is important to note that there was similarity in both groups concerning the most and least productive prompts. In other words, regardless of the type of programme, informants retrieved more lexical units in some prompts than in others.

Prompts	EOI		EFL	
	Total	Mean	Total	Mean
Animals	343	18.05	525	13.46
Clothes	333	17.52	390	10
Food and drink	420	22.10	455	11.66
Friendship	206	10.84	229	5.87
Happy	249	13.10	337	8.64
Give up	178	9.36	157	4.06

*Table 1:* Total and average number of responses retrieved by the E.O.I and the EFL group.

Likewise, as shown in Table 2, the position occupied by the prompts in the ranking of most to fewest prompts was practically the same in both groups. The only exception were ‘Food and drink’ and ‘Animals’: the former held the first position in the E.O.I programme and the second in the EFL group, whereas the latter occupied the second position in the E.O.I group and the first in the EFL programme.

Order (from the most productive to the least)	EOI	EFL
1 <sup>st</sup>	Food and drink (22.10)	Animals (13.46)
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Animals (18.05)	Food and drink (11.66)
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Clothes (17.52)	Clothes (10)

4 <sup>th</sup>	Happy (13.10)	Happy (8.64)
5 <sup>th</sup>	Friendship (10.84)	Friendship (5.87)
6 <sup>th</sup>	Give up (9.36)	Give up (4.06)

*Table 2:* Ranking of prompts in the EOI and EFL programme according to means.

The quantitative analysis showed the existence of significant differences between the two groups. Then, by means of a qualitative analysis of the learners' lexical availability output we wanted to move a step further in research and determine whether differences would also emerge when examining the characteristics of all the words retrieved by each group in terms of internal frequency, part of speech and word type. However, owing to space constraints, the present analysis will be restricted to the quality of the first word responses retrieved by each group.

#### INTERNAL FREQUENCY

Table 3 displays the most frequent first word responses retrieved by both groups distributed by prompt item together with the number and percentage of informants that retrieved the response. A close examination of the figures points to two relevant facts: The first one is the existence of a striking coincidence in the first word responses to 4 prompts out of 6 in the two groups. However, the percentage of students who provided the corresponding word or lexical unit as first response was not the same in the two programmes. The second fact is the existence of a wide variation in the first word responses. This variation is particularly evident in Annex 1 where we include all the words retrieved by the two groups distributed by prompt.

	EOI		EFL	
Prompts	Lexical unit	Nº of informants	Lexical unit	Nº of informants
Animals	<i>Dog</i>	6 (31.58%)	<i>Dog</i>	16 (41.02%)
Clothes	<i>T-shirt</i>	4 (21.05%)	<i>T-shirt</i>	15 (12.82%)
Food and drink	<i>Vegetables</i>	3 (15.79%)	<i>Hamburger</i>	7 (18.92%)
	<i>Water</i>	3 (15.79%)		
Friendship	<i>Friends</i>	8 (42.10%)	<i>Friends</i>	22 (61.11%)



Happy	Football	3 (15.79%)	Party	6 (16.22%)
Give up	Study	2 (10.53%)	Study	7 (18.92%)

Table 3: The most frequent first word responses distributed by prompt and teaching programme.

### PART OF SPEECH

In this analysis we present the word types retrieved by prompt item once classified into nouns (N.), adjectives (Adj.), verbs (V.), adverbs (Adv.) and prepositions (Prep.). As noted in the methodology section, in our lexical availability task we included three concrete nouns ('Animals', 'Clothes', and 'Food and drink'), one abstract noun ('Friendship'), one adjective ('Happy') and one phrasal verb ('Give up'). Our main objective was to determine whether word responses would be affected by the prompt category. Regarding concrete nouns (traditional prompts), as Table 4 shows, except for 1 adjective, nouns were the predominant category in the words retrieved by the three prompts formulated as concrete nouns.

	Animals	Clothes		Food and drink
	N.	N.	Adj.	N.
EOI	8	11	1	12
EFL	11	13	-	26

Table 4: Distribution of Parts of speech in response to 'Animals', 'Clothes' and 'Food and drink'.

In comparison with the traditional prompts, more variation was observed in the word responses retrieved by non-traditional prompts. As Table 5 shows, the latter elicited words from other parts of speech apart from nouns, as for instance adjectives, verbs, adverbs and prepositions. This pattern was recurrent in the two groups, who retrieved similar amount of types from other categories. Thus, in the light of the figures we can claim the absence of differences between the two teaching programmes as far as the class of the words retrieved is concerned.

	Friendship				Happy				Give up			
	N	Adj	V	Adv	N	Adj	V	Adv	N	Adj	V	Prep
EOI	5	2	-	1	12	2	1	1	5	1	12	1
EFL	7	-	2	1	15	3	4	-	9	2	10	-

*Table 5:* Part of speech in the words retrieved by the two groups in response to ‘Friendship’, ‘Happy’, and ‘Give up’.

## WORD TYPE

Table 6 displays the number of words retrieved per prompt classified into Abstract (A) or Concrete (C) words. As can be observed, there is a clear predominance of concrete words over abstract words, the difference being 107 words more in the concrete words category. Regarding abstract words, a relevant finding is that most were elicited by the new prompts rather than by the traditional prompts where there was just one abstract word elicited. Another relevant finding is that ‘Give up’ generated the highest number of abstract terms.

	Animals		Clothes		Food and drink		Friendship		Happy		Give up	
	A.	C.	A.	C.	A.	C.	A.	C.	A.	C.	A.	C.
EOI	-	8	1	11	-	12	3	5	3	10	6	11
NO EOI	-	11	-	13	-	26	4	6	5	17	6	16

*Table 6:* Distribution of concrete and abstract words per prompt.

## DISCUSSION

Research question one posed whether EFL learners at an E.O.I program and at the English regular program would show quantitative differences. Our results proved that this is indeed what happens. The data showed how in comparison with EFL learners in the regular programs, the E.O.I learners systematically retrieved a significant higher number of words in all the prompts included in the lexical availability task. One difficulty (and at the same time, novelty) of this study is the absence of publications on the effectiveness of the E.O.I collaborative program in comparison to the EFL regular program, let alone comparisons of EFL learners’

lexical availability in an E.O.I and in a regular program. With caution, we could establish certain parallelism between our findings and the ones obtained by López González (2014) with secondary school Polish students, learners of Spanish as a foreign language in an intensive and an extensive program. We will specifically base our comparison on the prompts in common: 'Animals', 'Food and drink' and 'Clothes'. In this comparison the E.O.I group attains the highest means in the three prompts, whereas the EFL group attains the lowest. However, we need to be careful when comparing both studies since the languages (Spanish and English) and the distribution of hours of instruction are different. In our samples the distribution is similar regardless of the teaching programme (4 hours per week during 1 course). However, López González's (2014) sample differed in the distribution of the hours of instruction resulting on one year of intensive course (18 hours per week) compared to a three year extensive programme where learners received 1 hour per week of Spanish during 18 weeks per academic course. As we mentioned in the methodology section, the main differences between the EOI and the EFL programme were the textbook and the language input received in class by the two groups. It is quite plausible that the differences in the quantity of words retrieved by both groups might be due to the textbooks used, or with the quality of the input received in class. Another explanation for this finding might be that the E.O.I group was more motivated towards English than the regular EFL group. Fernández Fontecha (2010) argued that the highest motivated students performed better in a lexical availability task. Likewise, the presence of more girls than boys in the E.O.I sample might be an explanation of the results. In the same study, Fernández Fontecha observed a higher motivation in girls than boys. Similarly, Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009a) noted how girls retrieved a higher number of words in a lexical availability task with some of the prompts that we have used in this study. Certainly, more research is needed in which all those factors be controlled.

Most lexical availability studies have shown agreement in pointing out at 'Food and drink' as the most productive prompt (e.g. Dimitrijević 1969; Etxebarria 1996; Carcedo 1998; Germany and Cartes 2000; Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba 2009a,b; Agustín LLach and Fernández Fontecha 2014; and López González 2014). Our results corroborate previous research since the most productive prompt in the E.O.I group was also 'Food and drink', not in the EFL group, where we found 'Animals' as the most productive. However, in interpreting this result we should keep in mind the small percentages in the differences in explaining the productiveness of some prompts in detriment to others. Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009b: 17) provided three reasons for this. The first one was concerned with the exposure to certain semantic fields. That is, learners may be more exposed to 'Animals' or 'Food and drink' than to 'Environment' or 'Means of transport'. In the present study, learners retrieved a higher number of lexical units in the three traditional prompts than in the new ones. Following Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba's argument, we could interpret our findings as a result of learners' greater exposure to the traditional prompts than to the

new ones. The second reason was related to the difficulty and ease to learn new words. According to Laufer (1990), as quoted in Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009: 17), some words are more difficult to learn than others (i.e. verbs entail a higher degree of difficulty than nouns). Hence, extrapolating this argument, the words related to the most productive prompts might have been easier to learn than words related to the less productive prompts. Finally, the third reason provided by Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009b) is related to age of acquisition. According to these scholars, who in turn base their argument on Catling and Johnston (2005) among others, the most productive prompts lexical units seem to be learnt earlier. That means that the words acquired earlier are more internalised in learners' minds, and therefore, are more available. In this line Agustín LLach and Fernández Fontecha (2014: 77) argued that the type of instruction and the development of a learner's psychological, cognitive and linguistic factors are also reasons that can explain that phenomena. Moreover, Hernández, Izura and Ellis (2006) and Hernández, Izura and Tomé (2014) pointed out that, factors as age of acquisition, cognateness, and typicality influence lexical availability. That is, the words that are learnt earlier, that are most similar to the informants' mother tongue and those typical of a semantic category are usually the most available words. Therefore, the most productive prompts seem to comprise those words which are learnt earlier, similar to the mother tongue and typical examples of a category. In our view, the reasons postulated by Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda (2009b), Agustín Llach and Fernández Fontecha (2014), Hernández, Izura and Ellis (2006) and Hernández, Izura and Tomé (2014) serve to explain the causes for the high productivity of some prompts as 'Animals' or 'Food and drink' over 'Friendship' or 'Give up'. However, the important question here is why the most productive prompt differs in the two teaching programmes, remains unexplained. In the light of the reasons summarized above we can venture that the most plausible explanation for this difference can be that the exposure to the two most productive prompts might have been different in the two teaching programmes and this can be owing to the contents of the different textbooks used by the two groups. Again, further research is needed in this aspect.

We now move on to the discussion of the findings related to our second research question, in which we posed whether the two groups would differ in terms of internal frequency, parts of speech and word type. Regarding internal frequency analysis, our results showed coincidence in the most frequent first response in 'Animals', 'Clothes' 'Friendship' and 'Give up' in the two teaching programmes. On the contrary, in response to 'Food and drink' and 'Happy' the most frequent first words differed. The most frequent word in the prompt 'Animals' (*dog*) coincides with that reported by Carcedo (1998) and López González (2014). As to 'Clothes', our most frequent first response (*T-shirt*) does not coincide with that reported in Carcedo (1998) (*zapato (shoe)*) and in López González (2014) (*pantalón (trousers)*). Similarly, our results in 'Food and drink' (*water* and *vegetables* (EOI), *hamburguer* (EFL)), do not coincide with the most frequent response in Carcedo (1998) (*leche (milk)*). However, the word

*water* in the E.O.I group coincides with the most frequent response in López González (2014) (*agua (water)*). Therefore, only the most frequent response to 'Animals' is shared by the learners in the three studies. These differences across studies can be due to the target language (SFL in the case of Carcedo (1998) and López González (2014), and EFL in our study). Nevertheless, this fact neither explains why the EOI and the EFL groups differed in the most frequent word in response to 'Food and drink', nor why Carcedo's (1998) and López González's (2014) SFL lexical availability studies differ in the most frequent word in response to 'Clothes' and 'Food and drink'. A possible interpretation could be that typicality varies from one group of informants to another. As mentioned earlier, typicality affects lexical availability (Hernández, Izura and Tomé 2014). It seems plausible that informants perceive some words as the best examples of a semantic category differently; this would also explain the low frequency indexes of the first word responses retrieved per prompt in each group of informants.

Regarding the analysis of the part of speech, our results showed a predominance of nouns in the three traditional prompts. Interestingly, other word classes (adjectives, verbs, adverbs and prepositions) were retrieved in response to the new prompts, formulated as an abstract noun ('Friendship'), an adjective ('Happy') and a verb ('Give up') (Research question three). Our results corroborate the ones reported by Dimitrijević (1969), Carcedo (1998), Germany and Cartes (2000), Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009b), Agustín LLach and Fernández Fontecha (2014), and López González (2014), who reported a recurrent predominance of nouns in response to traditional prompts. Jiménez Catalán and Fitzpatrick (2014: 96) suggested three reasons that would explain the predominance of nouns in lexical availability studies: (i) The traditional prompts are all nouns (also stated by Dimitrijević (1969: 65), and most of them are superordinates or hypernyms which inevitably elicit nouns as responses; (ii) the first lexical units acquired by learners are in most of the cases nouns; and (iii) some words might be internalised in learners' mental lexicon as examples or prototypes of certain semantic categories (i.e. *T-shirt* in response to 'Clothes' rather than *swimsuit*). As Jiménez Catalán and Fitzpatrick (2014: 96) note, after Hernández, Izura and Ellis (2006) findings, this supports the argument that "typicality is a good predictor of lexical availability."

Finally, we will discuss the results for the analysis of word type (abstract vs. concrete) in relation to previous studies. In our qualitative analysis we have found the constant predominance of concrete words in the first responses retrieved by the two groups in all prompts. However, whereas in the three traditional prompts hardly none abstract word was retrieved, in the three new prompts there is an increase of the abstract words elicited by learners regardless the teaching programme. Then, as said earlier, the three new prompts elicited other semantic categories and other word types apart from concrete nouns. Nevertheless, in the two groups there was a predominance of concrete words in complete agreement with the results reported by Dimitrijević

(1969), Carcedo (1998), Germany and Cartes (2000), Jiménez Catalán and Ojeda Alba (2009b), Agustín LLach and Fernández Fontecha (2014), and López González (2014). The findings resulting out of the abstract prompts included in the present study ('Friendship', 'Happy' and 'Give up') provide an interesting answer to research question three as they seem to support the idea that the formulation of prompts influences the responses retrieved by informants. In the future, lexical availability studies should consider the idea of introducing a wider variety of prompts in terms of semantic category and word type.

## CONCLUSIONS

Regarding our first research question, data have shown, that the E.O.I group over performs the EFL group in all prompts comprising our lexical availability task. The differences were significant as proved by values obtained in the t test applied to the means. Therefore, the E.O.I group seems to have a larger available lexicon than the EFL group. Results show that the most productive prompt in the E.O.I group is 'Food and drink', whereas the most productive prompt in the EFL group is 'Animals'. Hence, the most productive prompt is not shared by the two groups of informants. Concerning our second research question, data has provided evidence of the absence of qualitative differences in the first word retrieved by the two groups in response to the six prompts comprising our lexical availability task. The results reported showed that the most frequent first responses retrieved are the same in the two groups in 4 out of 6 prompts. This tells us that learners had the same most available word in most of the prompts tested regardless of the teaching programme. Thus, there are not differences in the most frequent first word retrieved. The second and third parameters analysed were part of speech category and word type. Our findings indicate a predominance of concrete nouns in all prompts in both teaching programmes. Although we have not found differences between the two groups of informants regarding the type of responses retrieved, we have found differences between the type of responses retrieved in the traditional and the new prompts of our lexical availability task, issue posed in our research question three. This finding indicates that both groups have retrieved mostly concrete nouns in response to the traditional prompts. However, data have shown that the new prompts included in our lexical availability task have elicited different word classes (adjectives, verbs, adverbs and prepositions) and word types (abstract). Therefore, it seems that the formulation of prompts may influence the type of responses retrieved by informants.

Our findings contribute to knowledge in lexical availability studies on the following grounds: first, we have carried out a comparison of the most available

words of EFL learners in two teaching programmes in the same course level in the same school. Secondly, we have looked at the effect of prompts on learners' word responses. Nevertheless, we recognise the limitations of the present study. This study shows the quantitative and qualitative differences in the available lexicon of two different EFL teaching programmes in 10<sup>th</sup> year. However, due to space constraints we have not studied the possible effect of input contained in textbooks on the performance of the E.O.I and EFL learners. Both groups were exposed to the same number of hours of instruction, but their textbooks differed since the E.O.I group used an advanced version of the coursebook used by the EFL group. Thus, the first limitation of this study is that we did not control for the input contained in learners' textbooks previously. In our future research we will analyse the vocabulary lists included in the textbooks used by the two groups, in order to ascertain whether there are vocabulary differences and if those differences are related to the lexical units retrieved by each group in the lexical availability task.

Another limitation of this study is that we did not use a vocabulary level pre-test before the treatment (the E.O.I program) and we did not use a motivation test either; therefore, even if the two groups were allotted by the school to the same course level, we cannot be certain whether the differences observed in our study were the result of either a higher starting vocabulary level or to a higher motivation. These intervening variables should be controlled in future studies. Particularly, we consider it important to determine whether high and low vocabulary learners in the E.O.I and in the EFL group show similarities or differences in the number of words as well as in the quality of the words elicited out of specific prompts.

In sum, our findings show significant quantitative differences between the two groups, but not qualitative differences. Regarding the elicitation instrument, this study has shown that there are qualitative differences between the traditional prompts and the new prompts included in the present study. This finding is promising but needs further research with other prompts which will help to determine to what extent the formulation of prompts influences the type of words retrieved, by introducing new prompts formulated as abstract nouns, adjectives, verbs, among others.

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**ANNEX 1: DISTRIBUTION OF FREQUENCIES OF FIRST WORDS RESPONSES PER PROMPT.**

ANIMALS					
EOI			EFL		
Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)	Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)
<i>Dog</i>	6	31.58	<i>Dog</i>	16	41.02
<i>Cat</i>	5	26.32	<i>Cat</i>	10	25.64
<i>Monkey</i>	2	10.53	<i>Bear</i>	2	5.13
<i>Turtle</i>	2	10.53	<i>Mouse</i>	2	5.13
<i>Cow</i>	1	5.26	<i>Pig</i>	2	5.13
<i>Horse</i>	1	5.26	<i>Snake</i>	2	5.13
<i>Leopard</i>	1	5.26	<i>Crocodile</i>	1	2.56
<i>Snake</i>	1	5.26	<i>Lion</i>	1	2.56
			<i>Rabbit</i>	1	2.56
			<i>Rat</i>	1	2.56
			<i>Sturgeon</i>	1	2.56

CLOTHES					
EOI			EFL		
Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)	Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)
<i>T-shirt</i>	4	21.05	<i>T-shirt</i>	15	38.46
<i>Hat</i>	3	15.79	<i>Trousers</i>	5	12.82
<i>Skirt</i>	3	15.79	<i>Shirt</i>	4	10.25
<i>Cap</i>	1	5.26	<i>Skirt</i>	3	7.69
<i>Dress</i>	1	5.26	<i>Cap</i>	2	5.13
<i>Jeans</i>	1	5.26	<i>Shoes</i>	2	5.13
<i>Shirt</i>	1	5.26	<i>Trainers</i>	2	5.13
<i>Shoes</i>	1	5.26	<i>Coat</i>	1	2.56
<i>Socks</i>	1	5.26	<i>Dress</i>	1	2.56
<i>Trainers</i>	1	5.26	<i>Earring</i>	1	2.56
<i>Trendy</i>	1	5.26	<i>Hat</i>	1	2.56
<i>Trousers</i>	1	5.26	<i>Jacket</i>	1	2.56
			<i>Jeans</i>	1	2.56

FOOD AND DRINK					
EOI			EFL		
Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)	Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)
<i>Vegetables</i>	3	15.79	<i>Hamburger</i>	7	18.92
<i>Water</i>	3	15.79	<i>Pizza</i>	3	8.11
<i>Chips</i>	2	10.53	<i>Beer</i>	2	5.41
<i>Coke</i>	2	10.53	<i>Fish</i>	2	5.41
<i>Hamburger</i>	2	10.53	<i>Water</i>	2	5.41
<i>Apples</i>	1	5.26	<i>Apple</i>	1	2.70
<i>Baked beans</i>	1	5.26	<i>Banana</i>	1	2.70
<i>Banana</i>	1	5.26	<i>Beef</i>	1	2.70
<i>Chicken</i>	1	5.26	<i>Black pudding</i>	1	2.70
<i>Fish</i>	1	5.26	<i>Chicken</i>	1	2.70
<i>Ice-cream</i>	1	5.26	<i>Chips</i>	1	2.70
<i>Rice</i>	1	5.26	<i>Coke</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Egg</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Fish and chips</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Gin-tonic</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Macaroni</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Milk</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Muesli</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Orange juice</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Potatoes</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Potato pudding</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Rice</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Spaghetti</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Sushi</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Vodka</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Whisky</i>	1	2.70

FRIENDSHIP					
EOI			EFL		
Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)	Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)
<i>friends</i>	8	42.10	<i>Friends</i>	22	61.11
<i>Best-friend</i>	5	26.32	<i>Sex</i>	3	8.33
<i>Boy</i>	1	5.26	<i>Boyfriend</i>	2	5.55
<i>Cinema</i>	1	5.26	<i>Friendly</i>	2	5.55
<i>friendly</i>	1	5.26	<i>Love</i>	2	5.55
<i>Girlfriend</i>	1	5.26	<i>Girl</i>	1	2.78
<i>Happy</i>	1	5.26	<i>Go out</i>	1	2.78
<i>nice</i>	1	5.26	<i>Meet</i>	1	2.78
			<i>Presents</i>	1	2.78
			<i>Secrets</i>	1	2.78

HAPPY					
EOI			EFL		
Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)	Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)
<i>Football</i>	3	15.79	<i>Party</i>	6	16.22
<i>Friends</i>	3	15.79	<i>Happy</i>	3	8.11
<i>Funny</i>	2	10.53	<i>Food</i>	2	5.41
<i>Music</i>	2	10.53	<i>Friends</i>	2	5.41
<i>Cat</i>	1	5.26	<i>Funny</i>	2	5.41
<i>Christmas</i>	1	5.26	<i>Love</i>	2	5.41
<i>Games</i>	1	5.26	<i>Sex</i>	2	5.41
<i>Good day</i>	1	5.26	<i>Smoke weed</i>	2	5.41
<i>Happiness</i>	1	5.26	<i>Weed</i>	2	5.41
<i>Money</i>	1	5.26	<i>Bike</i>	1	2.70
<i>Peace</i>	1	5.26	<i>Circus</i>	1	2.70
<i>Smile</i>	1	5.26	<i>Drink</i>	1	2.70
<i>Tobacco</i>	1	5.26	<i>Football</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Give presents</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Happily</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Holidays</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Mobile</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Nice</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Play tennis</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Presents</i>	1	2.70

			<i>Sad</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Smile</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Summer</i>	1	2.70

GIVE UP					
EOI			EFL		
Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)	Words	Number of informants	Percentage (%)
<i>Study</i>	2	10.53	<i>Study</i>	7	18.92
<i>Against</i>	1	5.26	<i>School</i>	4	10.81
<i>Believe</i>	1	5.26	<i>Eat</i>	3	8.11
<i>Cannot</i>	1	5.26	<i>Maths</i>	3	8.11
<i>Competition</i>	1	5.26	<i>Lost</i>	2	5.41
<i>Difficult</i>	1	5.26	<i>Sleep</i>	2	5.41
<i>Drink</i>	1	5.26	<i>Smoke</i>	2	5.41
<i>Effort</i>	1	5.26	<i>Bad</i>	1	2.70
<i>Fail exam</i>	1	5.26	<i>Bike</i>	1	2.70
<i>Fall</i>	1	5.26	<i>Drink</i>	1	2.70
<i>Fed up</i>	1	5.26	<i>Feel bad</i>	1	2.70
<i>Football</i>	1	5.26	<i>Football</i>	1	2.70
<i>Give up</i>	1	5.26	<i>Gym</i>	1	2.70
<i>Leave studies</i>	1	5.26	<i>Have breakfast</i>	1	2.70
<i>Left</i>	1	5.26	<i>Left</i>	1	2.70
<i>School</i>	1	5.26	<i>Nothing</i>	1	2.70
<i>Sleep</i>	1	5.26	<i>Sad</i>	1	2.70
<i>Smoke</i>	1	5.26	<i>Shout</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Smoke weed</i>	1	2.70
			<i>Sports</i>	1	2.70
			<i>This exercise</i>	1	2.70

**ANNEX 2: SEMANTIC CATEGORIES OF THE FIRST WORDS RETRIEVED PER PROMPT AND GROUP.**

ANIMALS	
EOI	
EFL	
Nouns	
<i>Dog</i>	<i>Dog</i>
<i>Cat</i>	<i>Cat</i>
<i>Monkey</i>	<i>Bear</i>
<i>Turtle</i>	<i>Mouse</i>
<i>Cow</i>	<i>Pig</i>
<i>Horse</i>	<i>Snake</i>
<i>Leopard</i>	<i>Crocodile</i>
<i>Snake</i>	<i>Lion</i>
	<i>Rabbit</i>
	<i>Rat</i>
	<i>Surgeon</i>

CLOTHES		
EOI		EFL
Nouns	Adjectives	Nouns
<i>T-shirt</i>	<i>Trendy</i>	<i>T-shirt</i>
<i>Hat</i>		<i>Trousers</i>
<i>Skirt</i>		<i>Shirt</i>
<i>Cap</i>		<i>Skirt</i>
<i>Dress</i>		<i>Cap</i>
<i>Jeans</i>		<i>Shoes</i>
<i>Shirt</i>		<i>Trainers</i>
<i>Shoes</i>		<i>Coat</i>
<i>Socks</i>		<i>Dress</i>

<i>Trainers</i>		<i>Earring</i>
<i>Trousers</i>		<i>Hat</i>
		<i>Jacket</i>
		<i>Jeans</i>

FOOD AND DRINK	
EOI	EFL
Nouns	Nouns
<i>Vegetables</i>	<i>Hamburger</i>
<i>Water</i>	<i>Pizza</i>
<i>Chips</i>	<i>Beer</i>
<i>Coke</i>	<i>Fish</i>
<i>Hamburger</i>	<i>Water</i>
<i>Apples</i>	<i>Apple</i>
<i>Baked beans</i>	<i>Banana</i>
<i>Banana</i>	<i>Beef</i>
<i>Chicken</i>	<i>Black pudding</i>
<i>Fish</i>	<i>Chicken</i>
<i>Ice-cream</i>	<i>Chips</i>
<i>Rice</i>	<i>Coke</i>
	<i>Egg</i>
	<i>Fish and chips</i>
	<i>Gin-tonic</i>
	<i>Macaroni</i>
	<i>Milk</i>
	<i>Muesli</i>
	<i>Orange juice</i>
	<i>Potatoes</i>
	<i>Potato pudding</i>
	<i>Rice</i>
	<i>Spaghetti</i>
	<i>Sushi</i>
	<i>Vodka</i>
	<i>Whisky</i>

FRIENDSHIP					
EOI			EFL		
Nouns	Adjectives	Adverbs	Nouns	Adverbs	Verbs
<i>Friends</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Friendly</i>	<i>Go out</i>
<i>Best-friend</i>	<i>Nice</i>		<i>Sex</i>		<i>Meet</i>
<i>Boy</i>			<i>Boyfriend</i>		
<i>Cinema</i>			<i>Love</i>		
<i>Girlfriend</i>			<i>Girl</i>		
			<i>Presents</i>		
			<i>Secrets</i>		

HAPPY					
EOI		EFL			
Nouns	Adjectives	Nouns	Adj.	Adv.	Verbs
<i>Football</i>	<i>Funny</i>	<i>Party</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>Happily</i>	<i>Smoke weed</i>
<i>Friends</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Food</i>	<i>Funny</i>		<i>Drink</i>
<i>Music</i>		<i>Friends</i>	<i>Nice</i>		<i>Give presents</i>
<i>Cat</i>		<i>Love</i>	<i>Sad</i>		<i>Play tennis</i>
<i>Christmas</i>		<i>Sex</i>			
<i>Games</i>		<i>Weed</i>			
<i>Day</i>		<i>Bike</i>			
<i>Happiness</i>		<i>Circus</i>			
<i>Money</i>		<i>Football</i>			
<i>Peace</i>		<i>Holidays</i>			
<i>Smile</i>		<i>Mobile</i>			
<i>Tobacco</i>		<i>Presents</i>			
		<i>Smile</i>			
		<i>Summer</i>			



Give up							
EOI				EFL			
Nouns	Adj.	Verbs	Prep.	Nouns	Adj.	Adv.	Verbs
<i>Study</i>	<i>Funny</i>	<i>Believe</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Study</i>	<i>Lost</i>	<i>Happily</i>	<i>Eat</i>
<i>Competition</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Cannot</i>		<i>School</i>	<i>Bad</i>		<i>Sleep</i>
<i>Effort</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Drink</i>		<i>Maths</i>	<i>Sad</i>		<i>Smoke</i>
<i>Football</i>		<i>Fail exam</i>		<i>Bike</i>			<i>Drink</i>
<i>School</i>		<i>Fall</i>		<i>Football</i>			<i>Feel bad</i>
		<i>Fed up</i>		<i>Gym</i>			<i>Have breakfast</i>
		<i>Give up</i>		<i>Bike</i>			<i>Left</i>
		<i>Leave studies</i>		<i>Nothing</i>			<i>Shout</i>
		<i>left</i>		<i>Sports</i>			<i>Smoke weed</i>
		<i>Sleep</i>		<i>This exercise</i>			
		<i>Smoke</i>					

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