Using Four Reading Strategies to Improve Reading Comprehension in Young EFL Students

Jessey Sneey Sandoval Cruz

Requirement for the Degree of Magister

En Didáctica de la Lengua con Énfasis en una Lengua Extranjera

Director

Raúl Enrique García

M.A. in English Studies

Universidad Industrial de Santander

Facultad de Ciencias Humanas

Maestría en Didáctica de la lengua

Bucaramanga

2020

## ACKNOWLEDMENTS

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# ABSTRACT

TITLE: Using Four Reading Strategies to Improve Reading Comprehension in Young EFL Students*

AUTHOR: Jessey Sneey Sandoval Cruz **

KEY WORDS: picture books, reading strategies, reading skills, reading comprehension, semantic mapping, scanning, skimming, English practices.

DESCRIPTION:

The purpose of this research study was to improve fourth-graders´ reading comprehension by using four reading strategies (skimming, scanning, semantic maps & guess the meaning) in a private school in Floridablanca, Santander. With the aim of achieving the objective proposed, it was implemented two units based on the reading strategies. Data was collected through participant and non-participant observations, a pre- and post- reading test, a reading checklist, a rubric, a journal, and at the end a focus-group interview was conducted. The participants were 17 students between the ages of 8 to 10 years old. After analyzing the data, the results showed that the reading comprehension activities and the strategies implemented during the intervention of the study fostered students´ reading comprehension skills and motivation in a great extent.   Finally, the implementation of reading strategies in the classroom presented some benefits for the learning process: 1) When students put into practice reading strategies they become autonomous readers and learners, 2) motivation and students desire for reading increases, 3) When students comprehend better the texts they read they get better results on their test and classroom activities, and 4) The use of strategies helped students take part of the class by participating more.

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# RESUMEN

TÍTULO:  *

AUTOR: Jessey Sneey Sandoval Cruz**

PALABRAS CLAVES: Libros de imágenes, estrategias de lectura, habilidades de lectura, comprensión lectora, mapas semánticos, skimming, scanning, prácticas de inglés.

El propósito de este estudio de investigación fue mejorar la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes de cuarto grado mediante el uso de cuatro estrategias de lectura (skimming, scanning, semantic maps y guess the meaning) en una institución privada en Floridablanca, Santander. Para lograr el objetivo propuesto, se implementaron dos unidades basadas en las estrategias de lectura. Los datos se recolectaron a través de observaciones participantes y no participantes, un examen de lectura antes y después de la implementación, una lista de verificación, una rúbrica, un diario, y al final se realizó una entrevista de grupo focal. Los participantes fueron 17 estudiantes entre las edades de 8 a 10 años. Después de analizar los datos recolectados, los resultados mostraron que las actividades de comprensión lectora y las estrategias implementadas durante la intervención del estudio mejoraron en gran medida las habilidades de comprensión lectora y la motivación de los estudiantes. Finalmente, la implementación de estrategias de lectura en el aula presentó algunos beneficios para el proceso de aprendizaje: 1) Cuando los estudiantes ponen en práctica estrategias de lectura se convierten en lectores y aprendices autónomos, 2) la motivación y el deseo de los estudiantes por la lectura aumentó, 3) Cuando los estudiantes comprenden mejor los textos que leen obtienen mejores resultados en las evaluaciones y actividades en el aula, y 4) el uso de estrategias ayudó a los estudiantes a formar parte de las clase participando más.

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**Introduction**

One of the most important purposes of reading is helping learners to enhance their language proficiency. Harmer (2001) points out that "reading is beneficial media to ease students in learning language such as vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and the way of constructing sentences, paragraphs and texts" (p. 283-288). This means, reading comes to be an effective way of learning L2, because it helps learners improve other micro and macro skills in the language they are learning. In L1 and L2 reading, readers need to work on bottom-up and top- down processing. In both English and Spanish, readers recognize first linguistic signals such as letters, morphemes, syllables, etc. Although, readers do the same in both languages (L1-L2), the process could be slower in their L2 due to factors surrounding the learning process.

In the present study, one of the main factors that influenced the reading process was students' levels and the type of texts they were exposed to. Reading in L2 could be less encouraging than L1, depending on the factors, such as the level of students, level of proficiency, the type of texts, the context in which the readers are immersed, among others. Regarding this, L2 reading can be an arduous process, which not only requires extra effort from learners but also requires teachers´ understanding of the reading process of learners, reading strategies demanded in the process and the teaching methodology. Furthermore, learning to read is a lifelong process that learners develop since they are children and continue improving during their adolescence and adulthood.

Making an adjustment in the explicit teaching of reading was part of the present research project focused on helping fourth-graders to comprehend better texts through the use of reading strategies. This will be achieved by modifying reading lessons with strategies during the whole process of reading. Students will be instructed in the use of four reading strategies (skimming,

scanning, semantic maps and guessing the meaning). In addition, students will be using picture books in order to make the act of reading more meaningful. With the books, students´ personal experiences will be recalled and their background knowledge will connect the book´s content with the real world. Additionally, the teacher-researcher will have the track of every lesson through observations and a journal that will be filled with reflections. For the assessment of the activities, the teacher-researcher will use reading checklists, rubrics, and a pre- and post- test to measure students´ improvement in their reading process during the didactic sequence implementation.

Regarding the above, this study contains seven chapters: the first one presents the statement of the problem, the research questions, and the objectives. Chapter two portrays the theoretical framework. It theoretically defines every construct considered for the present study. The third chapter describes the literature review. Chapter four describes the research design which includes the methodological approach, methodological design, the context, the population and the sample, data collection instruments and ethical considerations. Chapter five presents the pedagogical intervention. It describes the phases, the stages and the activities developed during the didactic sequence. Chapter six presents the data analysis procedure and the results obtained. Finally, the last chapter presents the conclusions, the pedagogical implications some recommendations for further research and the limitations of the study.

## 1. Statement of the Problem

Despite the innovations in ELT classrooms, reading comprehension in L2 (second language) continues to be a difficult process especially for basic users of the second language. Low reading skills abilities affect reading fluency, understanding of vocabulary and comprehension for young

learners. "Researchers show there are several underlying causes for poor reading comprehension. Among the reasons are the complexity of the learning process, the type of instruction, a method for decoding, prior knowledge, a diverse population and development of vocabulary" (Caposey & Heider, 2003, p.20). Not only the low reading skills abilities affect the reading process but also the level of students, the background knowledge, the texts, etc.

Decoding plays an important role in the reading process of young readers, as it is common for beginner readers to struggle when they meet new and unfamiliar vocabulary as they read. "Research on English L1 vocabulary knowledge has demonstrated that fluent readers have very large and automatic recognition-vocabulary knowledge and that vocabulary knowledge is highly correlated with reading ability" (Grabe, 2009, p. 9), and that is why reading in L2 becomes as primordial as reading in L1. Readers have the benefit of expanding their vocabulary, improving their reading fluency and refining their grammar. This research study tried to establish ways to benefit students, through the use of strategies that helped enhance their reading comprehension process.

Reading comprehension is a complex process in which the reader has to do a variety of tasks such as inferring, comparing, labeling, summarizing, decoding, among others. Additionally, Sanford presents (2015) other factors that affect reading comprehension such as phonemic awareness, poor working memory, low prior knowledge (general knowledge) and lack of vocabulary. This confirms that reading comprehension is a complex process that forces learners to make word recognition, to prompt prior knowledge about an specific topic or use context clues to determine the meaning of words, to remember the information being read through the

understanding the reader is having during the act of reading and the basics of vocabulary the reader has.

Regarding the above, the class observations during the reading activities or examinations indicated that when students were reading texts in English, they did it as a mechanic activity of decoding isolated words. As a result, they did not understand the information they read sometimes, they had difficulties developing comprehension exercises even when they had to take out explicit information from the texts. Something that happened frequently when reading even short texts from their textbooks was students expressing: "*Teacher, I can't find the answer to this question*"- "*there is no answer to this question*" - "*I have read many times, and I can't find the right answer*". This situation was due to the lack of reading lessons and activities they have had in English classes. Therefore, if students do not interact with the text to understand the meaning of it and make sense of it, reading becomes a struggle for them and it is there where frustration and demotivation appears.

In the present study, participants don´t read much in English due to the lack of reading books the school provides. In the last two years, students started using a new series of books called "Cool reading", these series provide a fine book which contains 10 short readings about different topics. These readings are mainly in the form of comics. Since students began to use these series of books, they started practicing more reading during English classes and doing some reading activities in which they had to answer comprehension questions, draw, match and do some basic comprehension activities after the reading act. However, when reading these texts students had to deal with some issues. For instance, unknown vocabulary and the difficulty of understanding

questions and answering the questions, especially when they had to give a reason or justify their answers in open-ended questions.

Another factor that influenced the students' process of reading was the kind of texts they were exposed to in their English classes. Students are exposed to non-authentic texts that are generated by the textbooks they have. The textbooks present very simple texts and the reading exercises have simple questions asking for explicit information and in which learners do not have to make much effort into analyzing, comparing or questioning. "Textbooks and simplified learning materials are considered giving lack of exposure to the real English language used in daily life" (Febrina, 2017.p.7). Besides the lack of exposure to the real English language students have with non-authentic materials, students are not interested in these kinds of readings. This causes learners not to have a good attitude towards reading.

Taking into consideration the difficulties that students presented during the class observations in the reading activities and the factors that affected their reading comprehension process, a pre-test was designed and applied in order to confirm students´ difficulties in reading comprehension. The pre-test and the class observations showed that students did not use any reading strategy to comprehend a text. The majority of students were not able to answer questions about general information and some of them were not able to respond to specific information due to their lack of vocabulary. Finally, when doing open-ended questions students presented limited ideas and many of them answered incorrectly to these questions, because they could not write complete answers.

Regarding the factors mentioned above, the present study mainly focuses on the instruction of four specific reading strategies (skimming, scanning, semantic maps and guessing the meaning)

with a view to help students improve their reading comprehension difficulties. For this, three elements were relevant: the reader, the text and the activity. According to Snow (2002) "the reader, the text and the activity are three important elements in the act of reading because it is necessary to establish what the reader brings to reading and what the reader takes from the reading" (p.13-16). This means, the text that will be represented by the picture books, the reader that will improve and strengthen his reading comprehension through the use of reading strategies and the activity that will be the development of the didactic sequence during the implementation.

Likewise, this research project was guided by the main question: How does the explicit teaching of four reading strategies benefit students´ reading comprehension process?

Three more questions were formulated as secondary: Which difficulties do students have in reading comprehension activities? Which elements of the pedagogical intervention will be suitable to improve students reading comprehension? To what extent, the implemented strategies helped students comprehend a text?

## 2. Objectives

To give an answer to the main question posted on this study a general objective and three specific objectives were designed.

### 2.1 General objective:

To determine how the explicit teaching of four reading strategies benefit students´ reading comprehension process.

### 2.2 Specific objectives:

- To identify students´ difficulties and abilities in reading comprehension activities.

- To design a pedagogical intervention using four reading strategies proposed by Brown (2001) to improve students' reading comprehension.

- To establish the extent to which the implemented reading strategies helped students comprehend a text.

## 3.  The study

### 3.1 Theoretical Framework

Reading is a process of comprehending texts to get new information that is why the main objective of reading is to comprehend what has been read by analyzing, interpreting, questioning, etc. "The ultimate goal of reading is to comprehend what has been read" (K. Nation, 2005; Paris & Hamilton, 2009, p. 32). In addition, reading becomes a complex process because learners need to comprehend the information they find in a text. Comprehension requires a lot of effort due to the interaction learners have to do with the text they are reading. "Reading, whether in the first, second, or additional language, is a highly complex and active process" (Wurr, 2003, p. 10), "that requires readers to engage with the text in search for meaning" (Anderson, R.C & Pearson, 1984, p. 255). Furthermore, reading comprehension involves two basic processes: lower-level processing that involves the most basic tasks in reading such as recognizing words and higher-level processing that involves more advanced tasks in reading among these are activating and utilizing background knowledge in the text meaning construction. "lower-level comprehension processes that involve translating the written code into meaningful language units, and higher-level processes that involve combining these units into a meaningful and coherent mental representation" (Kendeou, van den Broek, Helder, & Karlsson, 2014, p. 11). Thus, readers must be able to associate what is being read to their own experience in order to enhance understanding and have to know how to build up new knowledge from their background.

The ability for understanding also depends on how much learners can draw inferences. Inferring helps learners make meaning of the text by creating representations of it. However, a learner is not able to make inference due to the low-reading skills he / she has.  Learners face

difficulties in comprehending texts because of the lack of strategies they have to do higher-level processing tasks. "Individuals who experience difficulty in reading and comprehending texts are more likely to suffer from problems in school, in the workplace, and in their communities" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002, p. 205). A learner that is not able to comprehend texts neither in his first language nor in his second language, faces a lot of difficulties when reading any type of texts even in different subjects. For instance, a kid in fourth grade who is not able to comprehend a text in his mother tongue will probably have problems understanding texts in English, in Math, in Science, etc. Thus, inference plays an important role when comprehending texts in different levels. Readers not only find explicit data in the texts but also implicit information, that means readers can read between lines and make inferences about the information that is not specified.

As stated by Rios and Valcarcel (2005) reading "is a process that begins with the decoding of symbols, continues with the understanding of the written piece and finishes with the internalization of the information thanks to the background knowledge and experience" (p. 60). Likewise, Bojovic (2010) describes reading as "a complex, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible activity that takes considerable time and resources to develop. Reading is rapid, which means that readers should maintain flow of information at a sufficient rate to make connections and inferences vital to comprehension". (p. 1) As a complex process that takes considerable time and resources to develop it, instruction is needed in order to achieve mastery of the reading skills and abilities a learner can have. Additionally. reading comprehension occurs through interactions among the reader, the text, the activity and the context. These interactions occur when the reader is able to associate what he is reading with the real world in order to construct meaning,

summarize, give his point of view even synthetize and evaluate the information he is extracting

from the text with his background knowledge and the new one he has stored in his memory.

Concerning this, the main purpose of reading should be the comprehension of the message.

Comprehension should be considered as the product of the reading process, this means, once the

reader comprehends a text will be able to complete comprehension questions, write a summary

of it, give an oral report or even create a new story taking into account the one that was read. To

expand more the concept of reading, the paper will briefly define reading comprehension as well

as its stages, the types of reading and the importance of teaching reading strategies. Then, the

strategies for reading comprehension that will be implemented in the present study will be listed

and defined as well.

**3.1.1 Reading comprehension.** According to Sheng (2000) reading is a "process of

recognition, interpretation, and perception of written or printed material and says that the process

of reading deals with language form, while comprehension, the end product, deals with language

content" (p,12). This means, reading comprehension is the integration of many cognitive

processes in which a learner must comprehend a text as a whole by connecting individual ideas

to build a coherent mental representation of it. Also, Partnership (as cited in Díaz & Laguado

,2013) states that "reading comprehension is about understanding a text which is read through

the process of constructing meaning from a text" (p.137).

In addition, Alderson & Urguhat (1984) expressed that "reading comprehension focuses on

three elements: the text being read, the background knowledge possessed by the reader and

contextual aspects" (p,95). As mentioned before, reading comprehension is an integration of

different tasks done by the reader. To comprehend a text the reader should be able to interact

with the text, connect what she/he is reading to his own experience. Additionally, Ríos &
Valcárcel (2005) state that "reading comprehension is a gradual process, which includes different
skills and depends on readers´ previous knowledge and experiences" (p,60). Thus, reading
comprehension is not only a complex procedure in which readers interpret, recognize and
construct meaning but also demands readers to rely on background knowledge and experiences
in order to reconstruct meaning in ways that connect to their reality and experience. Kendeou et
al. (as cited in Grabe, 2009) emphasizes that:

Comprehension is not a unitary phenomenon but rather a family of skills and activities. A
general component in many definitions of comprehension is the interpretation of the information
in the text…. At the core of comprehension is our ability to mentally interconnect different
events in the text and form a coherent representation of what the text is about. (p. 39).

To continue understanding the process of reading comprehension is necessary to know the
three stages in which reading should be taught. Deyuan & Yufen (2006) present the three stages
(pre-reading, while- reading and post-reading) in their study as it follows:

Table 1. Reading stages by Deyuan and Yufen (2006, p. 124-126)

| | |
|---|---|
| PRE–READING: | The teacher spends some time introducing a topic, encouraging skimming, scanning, predicting, and activating schemata so that students can bring the best of their knowledge and skills to a text when they have been given a chance to "ease into" the passage |
| WHILE-READING: | The teacher job is to help students to understand the specific content and to perceive the rhetorical structure of the text. It also requires teacher guidance to ensure that students assume an active, questioning approach to the material. |

| POST-READING: | The last stage of reading is intended to review the content; work on bottom-up concerns such as grammar, vocabulary, and discourse features; and consolidate what has been read by relating the new information to the learners´ knowledge, interest and opinions. |

These stages can help students comprehend from the hardest part to the easiest part of the texts that are read in every lesson and equip learners with the skills needed to become effective and autonomous readers. In addition, Hughes (2007, par.3) presents the three stages of reading including some of the strategies and activities to do during each stage. Here are some of the examples she mentions:

During the Pre-reading stage learners can activate prior knowledge, set a purpose for reading, make predictions and preview a book, go on a picture walk and question and make predictions about the story. On stage two (during reading) learners can make connections of what they are reading with their own lives; predict what will happen next. "Having students make predictions engages them in the reading task and encourages them to become active participants in the learning" (Hughes,2007, par, 12); and synthesize information into key points. Finally, on stage three, learners can retell some parts of the story, discuss favorite parts or elements of the story, answer questions, make comparisons, write another ending to the story, play a game about the story, and reflect. These three stages should be done in every reading activity, the pre-reading activities that help learners get familiarized with the text, the while-reading activities that help readers connect ideas, comprehend much better the text by doing predictions, questioning, etc. and the post-reading activities that help readers to go beyond the text and do a further analysis of them by questioning, retelling, etc. For the present study, these stages helped participants get a

picture of the stories before the reading, comprehend each page they read during the reading, and interpret, analyze, discuss extra information after the reading.

**3.1.2 Types of Reading.** There are two types pf reading: extensive reading and intensive reading in the following paragraphs is briefly defined each one of them.

**3.1.2.1 Extensive Reading**. Patel and Jain (2008) defined extensive reading as: "A way to obtain a general understanding of a subject and includes reading longer texts for pleasure. The reader wants to know about something. The reader doesn't care about specific or important information after reading" (p.117-123). Generally, people read to keep updated about any specific topic. The majority of participants that took part in this study showed little interest in reading in both their L1 and L2 for pleasure, they just read the texts that they were assigned for their classes.

Thus, extensive reading help readers to become more motivated to read. When a reader finds books that are appealing to him, they can easily understand them and they can turn into autonomous learners.

**3.1.2.2 Intensive Reading.** "Intensive reading is related to further language learning under the teacher's guidance. Intensive reading provides a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms" (Patel & Jain 2008, p. 117-123). This means, readers will focus on the language (grammar, vocabulary, main ideas, author´s purpose) more than the text itself. In this reading, the learners read the texts to learn something in particular. According to I.S.P. Nation (2009) suggests that "intensive reading focuses on comprehension of a particular text with no thought being given to whether the features studied in this text will be useful when reading other texts" (p. 25). That is, one of the purposes of intensive

reading may be the comprehension of a text. The use of some strategies ensures that learners understand the text.

Additionally, intensive Reading focuses on different aspects depending on the main objective of the lesson the teacher has. Some of these aspects presented by I.S.P. Nation (2009) are: "(1) comprehension, (2) regular and irregular sound spelling relations, (3) Vocabulary, (4) Grammar, (5) Cohesion, (6) Information structure, (7) Genre features, (8) Strategies" (p.25). The effect of teaching intensive reading should be to get learners learn specific features to comprehend better the text being read and improve their reading skills and abilities. For the present study, intensive reading was used in order to improve comprehension, to help learners to develop useful reading strategies and to analyze the meaning of some words from the texts.

**3.1.3    The importance of Teaching Reading Strategies.** When learners read, they decode, integrate, comment, infer, analyze, associate and evaluate information in texts. They cope with different meanings in their heads and in the minds of others. This negotiation of the meaning involves the rephrasing and restructuring of phrases between two or more learners to enable them to comprehend the meaning of the messages. When comprehending, learners attempt to go beyond the word-level of texts to get to the big picture so that incomprehensible input becomes comprehensible through negotiating meaning. "When comprehension is successful, learners are left with a sense of satisfaction from having understood the meaning of a text." (NSW Department of Education and Training, p.2), this means comprehension becomes successful when a learner is able to decode, build new vocabulary, enrich their prior knowledge, and use comprehension strategies while reading a text. In other words, a good reader is capable of using a variety of strategies to comprehend better the text that is reading. According to Roit (2005)

"Readers use strategies consciously to make sense of the text, remember critical ideas and integrate new learning into an existing schema or prior knowledge" (p, 3). So, students must learn how to use strategies more independently, to solve problems, go over the text deeper, search for connections and infer relevant information from a text. Therefore, instruction becomes as important as the strategies implemented during the act of reading. If all readers were taught how to use individual comprehension strategies since elementary school, they would be good and strategic readers. "It is beneficial to begin instruction by teaching individual comprehension strategies. It takes time for students to develop strategic knowledge and proficiency" Pressley (as cited in Roit,2005, p.5). On the other hand, learners who have problems with comprehension have inefficient strategies and they are not conscious of what to do while they read. "Providing students with explicit instruction in comprehension strategies can be an effective way to help them overcome difficulties in understanding texts" (Graham & Bellert, 2004, p.12).

*Reading strategies* are important to grant comprehension and help to develop readers' abilities at their lower level process. Based on the readers´ objectives, the information found in every text can be analyzed and interpreted it using some strategies, In the next paragraph, the strategies that will be taught to improve learners reading comprehension are presented.

**3.1.4   Reading Comprehension strategies.** Students learn in a variety of ways, that is why learning strategies play an important role in students´ learning processes. Oxford states that (1990) "learning strategies are steps taken by students to enhance their own learning" (p.1). This means, learning strategies are tools to enhance students´ own learning and understanding of a topic.

There are many strategies that can make the act of reading easier and comprehensible. Some of them are predicting, inferring, summarizing, skimming, scanning, evaluating, among others. Likewise, the explicit teaching and use of reading strategies to comprehend a text corresponds to the procedures that teachers and students use to enhance reading comprehension. For the present study, four reading strategies were selected to enhance students´ reading comprehension skills and abilities. These strategies were: skim the text for main ideas, Scan the text for specific information, use semantic mapping for organizing information, and guess the meaning of words using the context or clues from the texts.

These strategies were chosen regarding students´ difficulties in reading. From the observations done and the classroom reading activities graded, students showed problems with new vocabulary, general ideas, specific information, inference, and summarizing relevant information. These strategies were taken from Brown´s research on reading on a second language (2001).  The purpose of teaching these four strategies was to instruct learners about comprehension strategies, have learners use such strategies with teacher guidance, and let students know the importance of using the strategies when reading on their own. Next paragraphs will define and discuss the four strategies used in the study.

**Skim the text for main ideas.** Skimming helps learners to predict the purpose of the passage or the main idea of the text by running one´s eyes across the whole text. According to Sutz & Weverka (as cited in Yusuf, 2017) "readers only have to take the most important information and the main idea rather than read all of the words" (p.47). One of the benefits of skimming is that learners can remember relevant information from the texts, they are reading. According to Abdelrahman and Bshara, (2014) "skimming improve memory, increase concentration and

reduce procrastination and stress".  Additionally, Abdelrahman and Bshara presented three steps

of skimming as follows: "(1) Read first sentence of the paragraph, (2) Read last sentence of the

paragraph, (3) Read key words in between" (Abdelrahman & Bshara, 2014, p.170). These steps

are techniques for learners to skim better. For the present study, these three steps were taught to

students in order to help them find general ideas easier on a text.

The importance of teaching students skimming for main ideas helps them not to translate

every single word from the texts and predict the purpose of the text or paragraph by analyzing

the keywords of the passages.

**Scan the text for specific information.** On the contrary, in scanning the reader is not interested

with the whole meaning of the text, but the details of it. According to Brown (2001) "the main

purpose of scanning is to extract specific information without reading through the whole text"

(p.308). Additionally, there are more procedures to follow when scanning such as finding clues

or keywords to find an answer to a question. Some other procedures of scanning techniques are

(as cited in Thamrin,2014):

  (1) Keep in mind only the particular information to be found out. (2) Make a choice, which

      clues would support the finding of the required information. (3) Have a rush view and

      sweeps down the page quickly to find out the clues. (4) If the clues are found out, read

      the section to get the information needed. (p. 3).

Taking into account both skimming and scanning for the enhancement of students´ reading

comprehension, the implementation of these strategies has increased learner´s abilities in reading

comprehension. Ulmi, Sundari, & Sukmaantara (2005) did a study in which they examined the

effect of using skimming and scanning techniques on eight- grade students´ reading

comprehension achievement of recount texts. The design of this research was experimental. The participants were divided into two groups (experimental and control). The data collected was from interviews, documentation, and administering the reading test. Finally, the researcher suggests that English teachers use skimming and scanning in teaching reading comprehension in order to practice the student´s rapid reading comprehension.

**Use semantic mapping or clustering.** According to Brown (2001) "semantic mapping helps the reader to provide some order to chaos" (p. 308), that is organize learners´ ideas through the use of an extra tool, in this case, a semantic map. The main purpose of creating maps when reading is to help learners summarize the texts using keywords or important concepts from the lecture. Besides, semantic maps help learners organize concepts, ideas and main information from the texts so, this information can be used later to retell or sum up what was read before. This strategy is commonly known as graphic organizers, mind maps, or even flow charts and "It creates an important combination of text-structure awareness, main idea recognition, and imagery" (Grabe, 2009, p.213). Additionally, mind maps or semantic maps are a way of developing higher thinking skills on learners, due to the analysis and interpretation they have to do when extracting relevant information and put it down together into a map. "Graphic organizers have been linked to the development of higher thinking skills for reading comprehension" Gil-García & Villegas (as cited in Echeverri & Mcnulty, 2010, p. 109).

Regarding the design of maps, they can put together information in different ways, from lines, circles to drawings or phrases that portray what was read before so, according to Ellis and Howard (2005) graphic organizers are: "Visual devices that depict information in a variety of ways. Most commonly, they employ lines, circles, and boxes, to form images which depict four

common ways information is typically organized: hierarchic, cause/effect, compare/contrast, and cyclic or linear sequences" (p.1).  Graphic organizers work as visual prompts designed to facilitate understanding of information by showing how relevant information about any topic is organized. One of the most important objectives of graphic organizers is to help teachers to notice how students think. Semantic maps or graphic organizers keep the words, but arrange them on a page visually so learners can better understand how concepts and information are related. For the present study, semantic maps were constructed by students during the post-reading activities and with the purpose of summarizing the stories read using keywords.

**Guess the meaning to learn vocabulary.** Teaching vocabulary is important in language teaching. In comprehension of a text, vocabulary is needed.  Harmer (1991) pointed out "If language structures make up the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh" (p.153). This means, limited vocabulary knowledge avoids students from understanding a text. If a reader does not have enough understanding of words in a text, nothing can be conveyed.

According to Brown (2001, p. 309) learners can use guessing the meaning with the purpose of: (1) guessing the meaning of a word,(2) guessing a grammatical relationship, (3) guessing a discourse relationship, (4) inferring implied meaning ("between the lines"), (5)guessing about a cultural reference, (6) guessing content messages. For the present study, guessing was used to guess the meaning of words and to infer implied meaning using the context. This strategy supports a lot the reading process of learners, due to the brainstorming students can do before and during the act of reading. The objective of teaching this strategy was to help students

comprehend the texts much easier by guessing the meaning of words using implied meaning, context, pictures, etc.

When we see a new word, we may notice it and (tacitly) recognize its form and part of speech; we may notice some aspects of the word form - some affixes or word stem parts that contribute to a guess; we may quickly associate some meaning with the word - a property, a thing, an action - within the topic of the reading passage; … ( Grabe, 2009,p. 274).

Having described the processes involved in L2 reading and the micro-skills that will be used for the development of the present study, it is important to define what reading assessment is and how important it is.

**3.1.5   Reading Assessment for learning.** "Reading, arguably the most essential skill for success in all educational contexts, remains a skill of paramount importance as we create assessments of general language ability" (Brown, 2004, p. 185). One of the main goals that reading assessment provides is to give feedback on the skill processes of learners. Moreover, one of the main purposes of assessment in reading is to make learners aware of the development of their reading skills by reflecting on their own learning process. "Reading assessments are used for many purposes, but all appropriate uses begin from an understanding of the reading construct, an awareness of the development of reading abilities, and an effort to reflect the construct in assessment tasks" (Grabe, 2009, p. 352). when we assess learning, teachers gather feedback on student performance and are continuously engaging learners to enhance their learning processes by developing effective strategies and motivating students to improve. The key of assessment is not only providing an answer but to work on learners´ difficulties, develop effective strategies, and guide students to motivate and improve their learning processes.

According to Brown (2004, p. 209-213), there is a variety of ways to assess reading among the ones mentioned by Brown four were chosen for this study. Here, are the assessment tasks that were implemented in this study: (1) comprehension questions, that help learners seek answers and ask further questions to keep the reading going. (2) Scanning tasks that allow all readers to find specific information in a text. (3) information transfer tasks that let students understand a graphic, and interpret the information to someone else. (4) skimming tasks that help learners determine the main idea in a text. These four assessment tasks provide learners with enough input and evaluate their reading processes by equipping appropriate feedback on their skills and abilities.

**3.1.6   Picture books as a media.** According to Brown (2004) "using a variation of media will increase the chance that the learners will recall better what they learn in developing the performance of skill they are expected to improve" (p.180). An advantage of using picture books in reading is that images help readers to understand much easier the story and depending on the interaction the images have with the written text readers can let their imagination fly. As cited by Grudving (2012) "The words may tell us the exact same story as we can "read" from the pictures. The words may draw our attention to details in the picture and the rest is up to our imagination. It all depends upon how word and picture interact" (p.22). This means, if a reader understands the interaction between pictures and words in a text, comprehension is successful. Picture books are a good way of making young learners interact with the words and pictures because they combine style regarding both visual and verbal codes.

Similarly, Matulka (2008) expresses that "a good picture series in a story links the reader to the pictures and generates the implication of the pictures. Story and pictures work together to

push the story onward" (p. 307). Picture books offer opportunities for beginner readers as well as for teachers. For the present study, pictures books were selected for the type of population, the age of this population, the level they are in, and the difficulties they have shown during their process of reading. "Students enjoyed picture books and felt they had made development in their English language ability, especially in terms of motivation and confidence" (Lee, 2015, p. 66-77).

### 3.2 Literature Review

Four themes will be discussed in this section in order to conceptually frame the constructs underlying this study and understand how these have been applied in research studies in various types of settings. The themes include: a) skimming and scanning to improve reading comprehension, b) using graphic organizers to improve reading comprehension, and c) stories and pictures books for reading.

**3.2.1   Skimming and Scanning to Improve Reading Comprehension.** Brown (2001) affirms "skimming and scanning are the most common reading strategies learners use" (p. 308). For this reason, many authors have investigated the implementation of these strategies in different scenarios and with different populations. For instance, Fauzi (2018) found in his study that skimming and scanning strategies were effective and improve students´ comprehension in reading with regard to: "(1) identifying purposes and organizational patterns of texts; (2) understanding unknown vocabulary from structural clues and word parts; (3) inferring information from the passage; (4) understanding facts and details from the text; and (5) defining author's attitudes, tones, and purposes on the passage" (p.85). This research finding suggests that the improvement of reading comprehension is related to reading speed rate. Thus, if a learner

improves his reading comprehension, he increases his reading speed. Besides, this study confirms what Bell (2001) and Iwahori (2008) found in their study. They found that after receiving treatment in reading activities students increased their reading rate.

Similarly, Carvajal, Calderón & Guerrero (2007) carried out a research study using the skimming strategy to improve sixth graders reading comprehension. They found that reading can be a significant process for students. They concluded that the skimming was important for reading and comprehending texts. On the other side, Jiménez & Izquierdo (2014) concluded that training students on reading strategies enhanced their reading comprehension process and thanks to the strategies, learners became more autonomous and aware of their learning processes. In their research study, Jimenez & Izquierdo present that the use of three reading strategies (skimming, scanning, and making predictions) guided learners in the path of autonomy, because students were able to make decisions and do assigned work by themselves and thanks to the efficient use of these reading strategies learners felt motivated while reading so, students showed an improvement in their reading skills.

Also, Diaz and Laguado (2013) in their study *Improving Reading Skills Through Skimming and Scanning Techniques at a Public School*, showed that using skimming and scanning techniques with high school students fostered their reading skills. The results showed that (1) scanning and skimming help to change students´ perceptions towards reading, a good example of this, was that students did not like much reading in English before the implementation because they expressed how difficult was to understand a text when they did not know the meaning of the words in the text, however, after the implementation researchers noticed students started to like more reading because of their constant participation in class. The next finding was (2) that

motivations increases the effectiveness of skimming and scanning processes. One of the techniques used to increase student's motivation was to students some time to read faster the text and find the general idea of the text, this is a clear example of skimming. Finally, (3) student's improvement in the reading comprehension process. During the classes, researchers noticed that the use of skimming and scanning was important in improving students´ reading comprehension since the results obtained after the implementation of this project were meaningful and the answers from students on the interviews were positive as well.

To summarize, it can be stated that all the studies mentioned above reaffirmed the importance of the use of effective reading techniques to improve students' reading comprehension. Additionally, all of the studies agree on the improvement in the reading comprehension process of learners using both strategies skimming and scanning, and how motivation helped the reading process of students.

Otherwise, there are other studies that show results not as positive as the stated before, and are important for the review of this literature. Yusuf & Nadya (2017) carried out a study with eleventh grade students, using the data collected from a pre-test and a post-test, they found an improvement in the post-test. However, they also found some setbacks in the implementation of these strategies. One setback was that if the learners are not completely concentrated, they cannot understand the passage at all. Moreover, during classroom discussion, students could not tell all the details about the passage; their knowledge about the text can be said to be superficial. The information extracted from the process of skimming and scanning was just enough to provide a simple and accurate answer to the questions from the reading texts. Another setback was found in Hirade (2016) study which focus was on how the explicit teaching of reading strategies

affected students' reading speed and reading comprehension. In the study they had two groups the control and the treatment group. The results showed that the reading rate averages increased over time in both groups. However, there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups. The treatment group had a larger standard deviation than the control group, so the stronger students in the treatment group performed better than those in the control group. As for the reading comprehension scores, the results do not indicate any significant differences between both groups. However, in general results indicate that the students who received instruction about reading strategies started to change their reading behavior little by little.

To summarize, It can  be said that all of the previous studies were relevant for the present study, because they give the researcher a wider view of what is to use skimming and scanning to improve reading skills but also the studies that showed something negative, helped the researcher to go along with the idea and look for activities and strategies connected to skimming and scanning that really help learners improvement and foster students learning process.

**3.2.2   Using Graphic Organizers to Improve Reading Comprehension.** A graphic organizer sorts information in a shorter way for better understanding by using various forms, from hierarchical to cyclical structures. "A graphic organizer is a diagram that represents a relationship directed by a thinking-skilled verb. The verb "sequence" calls for a diagram of a series of boxes connected by arrows that shows the "event" of one box leading to the "event" of another box" (Hibbard, K. M. & Wagner, E. A. as cited in Sam & Rajan, 2013, p.156). Some studies presented some benefits and positive results of using semantic maps (graphic organizers). In his study, Zaid (1995) put into practice a semantic mapping activity to explore the use of semantic mapping as a classroom technique. Regarding the findings, he realized that there are

two moments in the lesson where semantic mapping should be used: as a pre-task to activate students´ schemata and as a post-task to help them to put together what they have studied. Additionally, (Sam & Rajan, 2013 & Gomez, C. 2017 & Gómez, G, 2017) agreed on how the use of graphic organizers during reading comprehension activities helps learners to identify the main ideas and finding supporting details. Besides, Echeverri & McNulty (2010) affirm that "using graphic organizers led students to be motivated to read, learn more, and understand better" (p.116).

Another important benefit of using graphic organizers in the classroom is that this strategy enhances students' reading comprehension ability as well as motivation.

Satriyani, Wahjudi & Ananto (2016) concluded that employing graphic organizers through team-Pair- Solo strategy improved reading comprehension ability and the strategy employed encompasses the following steps : (1) Teamwork was relevant when comprehending the text, (2) discussing the answers,  (3) working in pairs, (4) constructing their own graphic organizers, (5) exchanging their work (6) giving feedback, (7) talking about the feedback (8) checking and reviewing individually, (9) retelling the text by using their graphic organizers. Following these steps when working on teams, pairs and solo showed that students´ involvement during the teaching-learning process improved since before the implementation.

So, it is clear from what has been discussed above that the use of semantic maps or as they are commonly known graphic organizers help learners improve their reading comprehension skills and foster motivation. For the present study, semantic maps were used as a post-assignment as suggested by Zaid (1995) and the steps followed by Satriyani, Wahjudi & Ananto (2016) in their study were relevant and taken into account when semantic maps were used during the sessions.

**3.2.3   Stories and picture books for reading.** Pictures books are appealing to readers due to the way pictures in them present and describe the main features of stories. One of the common benefits of reading picture books found in the research projects of  Grudving, (2012), Roslina, (2017) & Lavender, (2007) was that the use of picture books in the English classroom can increase learners´ reading comprehension, expand decoding and visualization skills thanks to the relation of the written and the visual text. In his study Khaiyali, (2013) fifth and fourth-grade teachers were trained on comprehension strategy instruction. He found that the use of picture books contributed to help teachers expand the amount of comprehension strategy instruction in the fourth and fifth-graders. In addition, teachers noticed that the criteria to select a good picture book is that this one should be well-illustrated, authentic, interesting and relevant to the student's culture, and short. It is important to highlight how stories and picture books are used in the classroom and in which way they foster motivation, Porras(2010) conducted a study in a Colombian public school about the teaching of English through the use of stories and she found that the children's motivation  increased when the stories were told or read,  students participated more in different activities, they comprehend better the stories and they acquired new vocabulary as well. During the implementation, the students and teachers followed a pre, while and a post-reading stage for reading the stories. These stages helped teachers to prepare students for the reading act and check comprehension. She concluded that teachers should look for a variety of ways to make learning significant for children and the use of stories and an interactive methodology made the learning process meaningful and fun for students.

To conclude, a good picture book should be well-illustrated, authentic, and appealing to students. Pictures books can help foster students´ motivation by letting them be part of a lesson doing different tasks such as reading aloud, predicting, among others.

In the present study, picture books were the tool used to improve reading comprehension and put in practice the reading strategies. They represent the text that was read, interpreted and analyzed by the learners. They were selected because of the colorful pages they have, their pictures, and their content that helped learners understand much easier the information they were reading.

In the following chapter, some issues such as the methodological design, phases, and instruments of this research work and data will be reported.

## 4. Research Design

This section will provide an overview of the methods that were employed to examine the impact of using reading strategies to improve students' reading comprehension. It will feature sections describing the methodological approach, the sample, the context and the data collection instruments.

### 4.1 Methodological Approach

"The central idea of Action Research is to intervene in a deliberate way in the problematic situation in order to bring about changes and, even better, improvements in practice" (Burns, 2010, p. 2). This kind of research not only brings changes and improvements to English practices but also involves a self-reflecting and critical approach to explore your own teaching contexts. To illustrate what Burns states, here is one of the descriptors presented in the journal of the present study by the teacher-researcher. In her log number 18 she stated as a form of

reflection that "I ́ve noticed that as a teacher, I need to look for more ways of interesting my students in every class…. Also, I need to plan better my lessons…. I can also say that observation helps a lot to improve my next sessions and lessons, because based on what I observe I make changes and look for other activities" (Journal, appendix 8).

This is a clear example of what action research is; the researcher self-reflects to bring better changes to his daily lessons. Action Research helps teachers and researchers to explore the different issues that can be found in a classroom. Some of the benefits that are presented by Ferrance (2000, p.13-15) in his book Action Research are:

- Action research is an authentic and meaningful research because it is directed by the teacher in his/her own space.

- Teachers take control over their teaching by designing a study, executing the study, tracking data, results and reflecting on their own practices.

- Teachers begin to value their own abilities to enhance knowledge during their projects.

- During the action research process, teachers seek for different ways to improve their teaching practices and motivate students.

Besides, in action research, researchers become critical participants in the action and participants of the action. This refers to what the teachers do while they are teaching and how they reflect on the problems and difficult situations they found daily in their classrooms. "Action research emphasizes the involvement of teachers in problems in their own classrooms and has as its primary goal the in-service training and development of the teacher rather than the acquisition of general knowledge in the field of education" (Borg, 1965, p. 313).

To do AR is necessary to have in mind four basic concepts: collaboration through participation, empowerment of participants, acquisition of knowledge, and social change. Using these four themes AR can be done to identify a problem area in a specific context. Once the problem is found the data can be collected and organized into different categories. Additionally, the data is interpreted and finally the researcher reflects on the action taken to start making changes and start a new cycle again. For the present study, Action Research helped the teacher-researcher to identify changes she needed to make in her teaching practices and looked for a way of helping her students to overcome and improve the issues they presented.

### 4.2 Methodological design

To develop a didactic sequence was vital to plan a whole design of every activity, instruments, techniques, and all the actions that were going to help the researcher find an answer to the main question of the present study. Figure 1 shows us the organization of each phase and each part of the research project in the figure below:
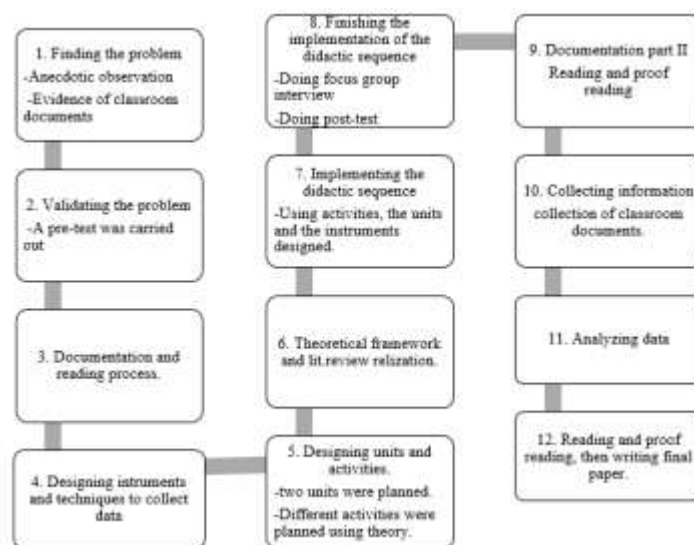


Figure 1. Methodological design and organization of the activities carried out during the research study.

As noted above, you can see a whole picture of the realization of every stage and phase during the development of the didactic sequence. Firstly, to start investigating and carrying out a qualitative research was significant to find a common issue in the English classroom during the English classes.

> Qualitative research attacks issues. It is based on the fundamental idea that "reality" is subjective: Every human being constructs an individual, personal view of the world on the basis of his or her specific interactions with the external world (including the people who are part of this world)" (Cropley, 2002, p.8).

The problem was evident in the documents that were done and graded during the English classes. The teacher started to do anecdotic observation as well, to observe learners' attitudes and behaviors during reading comprehension activities. Once the problem was determined, a pre-test was carried out. This pre-test (Appendix, 4) will be discussed and described in the session of data collection instruments. Secondly, the documentation process began. After the problem was stated, the revision of the literature began. It was important to start searching for theory and relating it to the study. The research questions and the objectives were designed as well as the constructs for the theoretical framework. In this phase, the researcher decided to work with some reading strategies proposed by Brown (2001) in order to improve reading comprehension.

Thirdly, the realization of the data collection instruments was vital to start implementing the didactic sequence. An observation form, a journal, a checklist, a rubric, a focus-group interview, and a post-test were designed in order to collect enough data to assess the intervention.

After designing the instruments, the planning phase took place. During this phase, the teacher-researcher planned and designed two units. One unit was designed taking into account the first

book "The Battle Butter Book" by Dr. Seuss. Every lesson was planned using a lesson plan format (Appendix, 2). The second unit was planned taking into consideration the book "Snow White Stories Around the World" by Jessica Gunderson. These units were relevant for the construction of each lesson plan and the creation of each activity in every session. Throughout the creation of the didactic sequence, the four phases presented by McTaggart, in Action Research were applied.

Once the teacher-researcher planned what to do in every session, she decided to improve the literature review and search for more information to complete the theoretical framework. The documentation occurred every moment during the realization of the paper, the planning phase, the observation, the reflection, and the intervention. Then, the implementation of the first unit took place from August 24th to September, 28th and the second unit took place from October, 10th to November, 13th. At the end of the didactic sequence, participants presented the post-test and a group of 9 students was chosen to be part of a focus-group interview.

With the information collected from the didactic sequence, the post-test and the focus group interview, the documentation process continued. During the writing process, was important to read, and proofread what it was already written and keep writing the next chapters of the paper. As soon as the implementation finished, the collection of documents took place. All the classroom documents that participants created and realized during the didactic sequence were collected with photos and recordings from the sessions and the interview. All this data was analyzed by separating categories, descriptors and similar patterns from the documents, instruments, and theory. During the data analysis, most data was transformed into a textual form.

For example, the focus-group interview recording was transcribed and the observations done by the teacher were documented in a word document as an observation form.

According to Lewin (1946) Action research "consisted in analysis, fact-finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, more fact-finding or evaluation; and then a repetition of this whole circle of activities; indeed, a spiral of such circles" (p. 37-38).

**4.3 Context**

The research was conducted at a private institution in Floridablanca, Santander. The researcher chose this school based on researcher's experience for two years teaching at this school to third, fourth and fifth graders. The school is regulated by a catholic order of Dominic religious women. The educational model of the institution is shaped by a holistic education and cognitive structural modifiability model. According to the PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional), the main objective of the English subject is to encourage students to appreciate and respect the value of their own world by respecting the plurality and the differences of other cultures. In addition, it promotes the practice of social interaction and the ability to establish relationships with other people and to behave adequately in different situations.

In addition, the PAS (Plan Integral de Área) is created and regulated by the basic standards proposed by the MEN (Ministry of National Education). The standards are aligned according to every grade and level of students. The teaching of English focuses on the development of the four communicative skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing, in which students can make use of different teaching tools and strategies such as videos, images, stories, songs, textbooks and the use of the TICs. For this to take place, a textbook and an English worksheet are created and used to teach the language and to orient students in the acquisition of a foreign language.

Finally, the realization of the final paper took place. Every process, phase, limitation and conclusion taken from the data, the sessions, the observations, were written down and separated by categories.

### 4.4 Population and Sample

Participants age: 9 to 10 years old

Classroom 1
Classroom 2
Classroom 3
Classroom 4
Classroom 5

**Fourth- graders**
**POPULATION**

Classroom 1

10 girls       7 boys
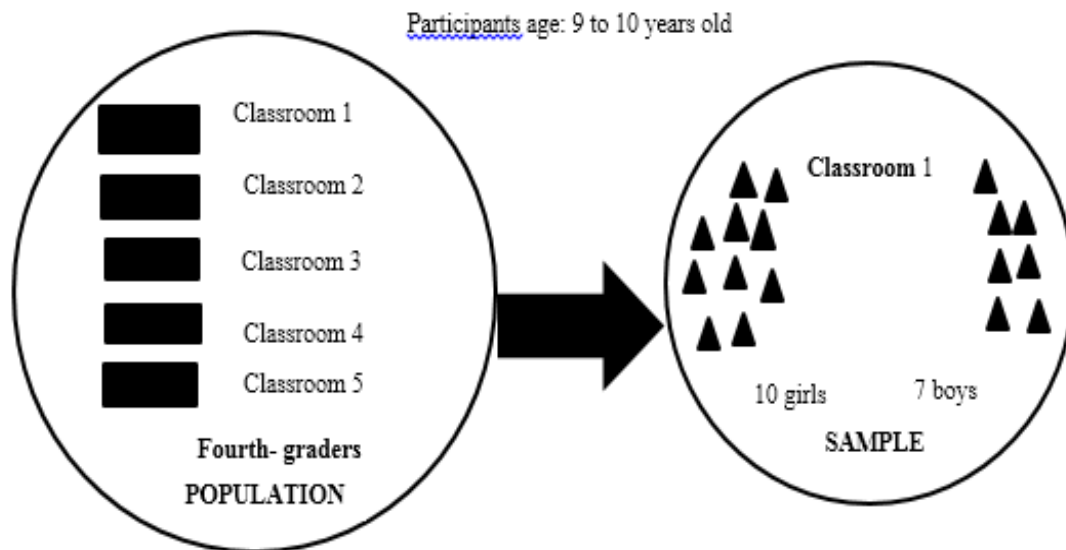
**SAMPLE**

Figure 2. graphic representation of the population and the sample of the present study.

The population was a group of fourth-graders from a private school in Floridablanca. The population chosen belong to a high socioeconomic status that means their families can afford an array of services, goods, and access to more resources than low socioeconomic status students. Most of the them live with their parents and they live near the school. This group was formed by 25 fourth graders aged between 8 to 10 years old. From this group of 25, 17 students were chosen to be part of the present study. These 17 students were chosen because of their proficiency level of English. Regarding these 17 students, 5 had a high-performance, 7 had a mid-performance and the remaining 5 had a low-performance in English language. In addition, from these 17 participants 10 were female learners and 7 were male learners. The sample took

five hours of English class per week. Although, the sample receives plenty of English hours during the week compared to others schools, the English level of some students is very low from the one is expected.

### 4.5 Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used included:

- Non-participant and participant observation

- Reading comprehension pre-test and post/test

- A journal

- A reading comprehension checklist

- A rubric

- Classroom documents

- A focus- group interview

These instruments were used during the three stages (Before- during and after) of the present study and all of them served for a different purpose. Below, it is presented a table with a summary of the data collected instruments after that, they will be described in details.

Table 2. Data collection instruments sequence.

| STAGE | INSTRUMENT | PURPOSE |
|---|---|---|
| **Before the implementation** | ✓ Non-participant Observation | To documentate participants´ attitudes, reactions during the classes. |
| | ✓ Pre- test | To evaluate students´ reading comprehension skills. |
| | ✓ Non- participant and participant observation. | To documentate participants´ attitudes and reactions |

| | | towards the activities. |
|---|---|---|
| **During the application** | ✓ Checklist | To evaluate the while-reading comprehension activities. |
| | ✓ Rubric | To evaluate the realization of semantic maps. |
| | ✓ Classroom documents | To have a record of students´ progress during the sessions. |
| | ✓ Journal | To reflect upon students´ attitudes and teaching practices. |
| **After the application** | ✓ Post-test | To evaluate and compare students´ progress in reading comprehension with the first test. |
| | ✓ Focus-group interview | To assess the activities, sessions and the tools used during the didactic sequence. To know students´ perceptions. |

### 4.5.1   Non-Participant and Participant observation

"From a research perspective, observation is fundamentally different from questioning because it provides direct information rather than self-report accounts, and that is one of the three basic data sources for research" (Dörnyei,2002, p. 185). That is, observational data allows researchers to observe carefully what participants do. In that way we can have a more objective account of events. During the present study was carried out non-participant observation and participant observation. Non- participant observation took place during each lesson, especially

when participants were working on the reading strategies taught by themselves. For the non-participant observation was pertinent to observe participants´ attitudes and their work during each session. Furthermore, during each session each participant was observed and the observation form (appendix, 3) was filled with descriptions from the activities, the stages and details from the sample. However, it was decided that the observation could not be completely non-participant, due to the participation of the researcher on the project and the reflection that was made during each session in her own teaching practices. "In classroom observation, no observer is entirely a participant, and it is impossible to observe in almost every non experimental situation without some participation." (Morse & Richards as cited in Dörnyei, 2002, p.179).

**4.5.2  Pre-test and Post-test.** The purpose of the tests was to help determine where knowledge and skills may be deficient and establish an insight of progress made as often as the result of an intervention. The pre- and post-test were used to evaluate participants´ skills in reading comprehension and to know if there was an improvement during the application and the intervention of the didactic sequence. The pre-test (appendix, 4) aimed to provide a first look to the main problem of the sample, that was the comprehension of general, specific information and inferences from a text. This pre-test was designed in the following way:

- It contained eight questions, which were multiple-choice. In the last question, participants had to justify their answer.

- From the questions, two questions out of the eight were asking about general information from the text, which means participants had to skim.

- Three questions out of the eight were asking about specific information, that means participants had to scan the text.

- Two questions asked about inference, participants in these questions had to interpret and analyze the text to get the correct answer.

- In the last question of the text, participants had to give their opinions and justify their answer.

This question was designed with the purpose of seeing whether the learners could give their opinion and they had enough vocabulary to do it in the foreign language.

Thus, this pre-test helped confirm participants´ difficulties in reading comprehension and the test was conducted at the beginning of the research project. The reading was taken from a sample of a KET test and it was adapted to the objective of the study.

On the other side, the post-test (appendix, 5) was conducted at the end of the implementation and aimed to provide an improvement on participants´ reading comprehension after the first test and the didactic sequence. As same as the first test, participants had to skim, scan and infer in the post-test and the questions were distributed in the following way:

- It contained seven multiple-choice questions. In the last question, participants had to give their point of view.

- From the questions, one question asked about general information. (skimming).

- Three questions asked about specific information from the text. (scanning).

- Two questions were about inference. Participants had to interpret the intention and the purpose of the text and author.

- Finally, the last question as the same as the pre-test, participants had to justify their answers by giving their opinions.

Both tests evaluate skimming, scanning, and inferencing. The form of the tests were multiple choice-questions due to the fact, the examinations presented by the participants at the school are in the same format. The main objective of applying these instruments was to find out to what extent the implemented strategies helped participants comprehend a text.

**4.5.3 Journal.** Burns (2010) states that "journal writing is something of a 'classic' tool in AR as it allows you to record the events and happenings in your location, your reflections, beliefs and teaching philosophies, your ideas and insights about your practice, and your personal histories as a teacher researcher" (p.89). For the present study, the journal (appendix, 8) was in a written form and the teacher-researcher had a record of it in every session. The journal was used during the didactic sequence, at the moment of writing the literature, results, data collection and every part of the paper.
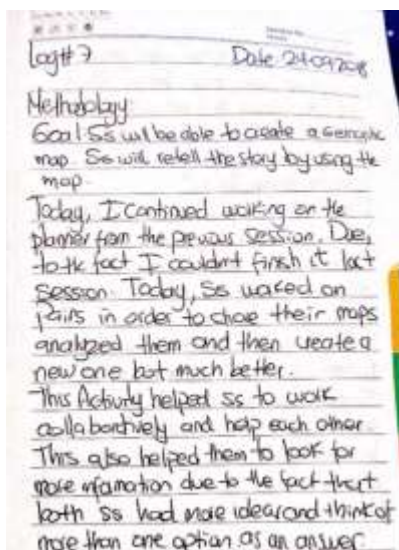


Figure 3. Log number 7 taken from the journal.

The journal contains 21 logs which were in the form of reflections about each session, and every moment described on them. Each log starts with the date and the number of logs. Then, it states which part of the project is reflecting (methodology, lit. review, etc.), after that, it specifies

a goal. Finally, it gives the details of every part observed and lived during each session of the present study. Additionally, the purpose of the journal during the implementation was to take notes every time participants were developing the while and post-reading stages in each activity. Each log includes comments on students´ behavior, reactions, feelings, and the context as well as teacher reflections and beliefs on her own teaching practices.

The journal was one of the most important instruments for the present study because it helped the researcher reflect on what she implemented in a session and look for improvements and change activities if necessary. "Keeping a research journal as in this you can show your readers the development of your thinking; help your own reflection; improve your time management; and provide ideas for the future direction of your work" Silverman (as cited in Dörnyei,2002, p.160).

**4.5.4   Checklist.** For the present study, a checklist was used to assess participants´ skills and abilities in the while-reading stage. This checklist (appendix 6) assessed some important aspects in which the participants have to:

- Highlight important information of the text or unknown vocabulary, while she/he reads.

- Identify the main idea of some parts of the text by using skimming.

- Identify specific information of the text by using scanning.

- Identify the author's purpose. (Did the author write the text to inform, entertain, or persuade?).

- Look for important similarities and differences in characters, events, or concepts.

Each of these items were checked during and after the participants did and completed the reading exercise. In these exercises, they had to answer questions in which they were requested

to skim, scan, and make inferences. The purpose of this checklist was to find how well participants performed in every reading activity using the strategies (skimming and scanning).

**4.5.5   Rubric.** "Rubrics are useful grading tools that add reliability, validity, and transparency to assessments" (Chowdhury,2019, p.61). They can be used to assess writings, course projects, oral presentations and many more activities that are done daily in the classroom. In the present study, the rubric (appendix, 7) was used to assess participants´ ability to create semantic maps. This semantic map rubric evaluated different categories and per each category, there was a score. The categories were:

- Highlights

- Outline and steps

- Keywords

- Main categories

- Organization

- Creation

For each of the categories above, there was a descriptor of a score depending on the performance of the participant in the production of every semantic map.



Figure 4. Semantic maps rubric

This rubric was used in the post-reading stage when participants finished doing their maps, these were collected and assessed using the rubric. The main objective of this rubric was to determine if participants could understand the stories read by summarizing them in the form of a map.

**4.5.6   Classroom documents.** Classroom documents were relevant to collect data. In this case, the documents that were collected were students´ written exercises and maps. "Classrooms are full of written documents –syllabus guidelines, lesson plans, textbooks, students' written texts, exercises, illustrations, maps, dictionaries and so on." (Burns,2010, p.91). These classroom documents were the guides and the readings used in each session. These classroom documents were collected and categorized in the following way:

- Reading comprehension activities.

- Semantic maps.

All work participants did during the implementation was part of the analysis. From small pieces of paper with short answers to drawings and maps, they created for each stage of reading (pre-while- post-reading activities). These documents were really important for the findings of the present study, due to the fact, they were the evidence of what participants did during the sessions and how well they performed in each task.

**4.5.7   Focus- group Interview.** A focus group is "a group comprised of individuals with certain characteristics who focus discussions on a given issue or topic" (Anderson, 1990, p.241). Nine participants were chosen to participate in the focus group and they answered a series of open- ended questions. They felt free to speak and express their ideas and beliefs about the lessons and activities done during the implementation.

Once the focus group was selected, a focus group interview (appendix, 10) was planned and designed in order to evaluate the sessions and the activities done during the development of the research project. This focus-group interview consisted of open-ended questions and it was a flexible interview, taking into account the participants were kids. The interview was divided into three parts: the first part asked information about perceptions and opinions towards reading and the things participants usually do during reading time. The second part consisted of students´ opinions about the books. Finally, the third part was directed to the sessions, activities, and strategies implemented during the didactic sequence.

During the focus-group interview was important to collect information about participants´ feelings, and opinions about the lessons, activities, the strategies used during the classes and the books used for reading. "Focus group interview aims at collecting high-quality data in a social context" (Patton, 2002, p. 17). The interview was carried out at the end of the implementation and it was applied by contextualizing participants with the questions, strategies and activities, then the teacher-researcher proceeded to record each answer and take notes about participants´ attitudes during the interview.

**4.5.8  Ethical considerations.** It was important to inform participants about how the investigation was going to be carried out, and the implications of using their personal information for the study.

> If the people who take part in the research are children, the researchers have to make sure that the parents or guardians are aware of what is going to happen. Due to their age, young people can be vulnerable and need to be treated with honesty and respect (Dawson, 2002, p.146).

Before starting the present research study, an approval from the institution to develop this study was obtained. This permission was given by the director of the school. She authorized the teacher-researcher to implement the present study.

Then, the participants were informed about the research at the same as parents because as all the participants were under eighteen years old, it was important parents' permission and knowledge about their children´s participation in the present study. Firstly, the researcher contacted students' parents in a school meeting, where she informed the reasons why she had chosen their children to participate in the research study. She explained to them how students were going to get benefit from the study. Also, she ensured them that their children's identities were not going to be revealed under any circumstances. Parents signed a consent form (appendix, 1) which had everything explained about the research, specifically some points as the pictures that would be taken and the documents collected during the sessions.

### 5.   Pedagogical Intervention

This research was aimed at finding out to what extent fourth-grade students were able to benefit their reading comprehension process using four reading strategies: skimming, scanning, semantic maps and guessing the meaning. Two picture books were used as the main tool for reading activities. The books selected were two narrative books, the first book named "The butter Battle book" by Dr. Seuss and "Snow-white stories around the world" by Jessica Gunderson. The didactic sequence was designed and planned using the strategies and the picture books as a tool of reading.

Table 3. Organization of the didactic sequence

| Didactic sequence organization | |
| --- | --- |
| **Number of participants** | 17 participants |
| **Number of sessions** | 19 sessions |
| **Number of hours** | 38 hours of class of 45 minutes |
| **Units** | Two units were designed |
| **Books** | Book 1: "The Butter Battle Book" by Dr. Seuss.<br><br>Book 2: "Snow- white stories around the world" by Jessica Gunderson. |
| **Phases** | 1- Planning<br><br>2- Acting<br><br>3- Observing<br><br>4- Reflecting |
| **Reading strategies** | Guessing the meaning, skimming, scanning, semantic maps (Brown, 2001). |

Taking into account the stages of reading    (pre-while and post-reading activities), the four reading strategies stated by Brown  (skimming, scanning, semantic maps, and guessing the meaning),the books, the content of the books,  and the number of hours of class,  each session was planned and changed when necessary in order to improve teaching practices and find answers to the research questions of the present study.

Two units were planned according to the books used during the didactic sequence. These units were divided into eight sessions, and these sessions were carried out in two hours of class per

week. However, every time participants read something in English classes from their textbooks, they implemented the strategies and all what they learned in the research time.

According to Kemmis & McTaggart (1998) "the action research process and strategy includes four stages: planning, acting, observing and reflecting" (p.10), and this is a continuous process that repeats every time a cycle finishes. For the present study, these four stages were used to develop the action research.
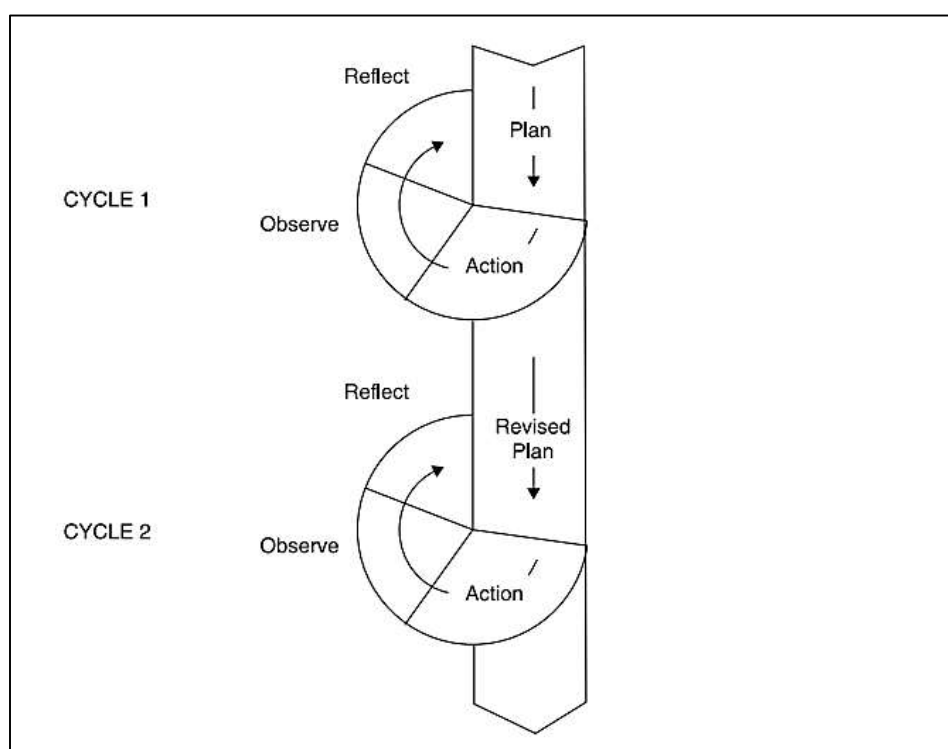


Figure 5. Cyclical Action Research model based on Kemmis and McTaggart (1998)

Taking into account the cyclical action research model of Kemmis and McTaggart, the following paragraphs will describe in detail what the teacher-researcher did during each phase.

### 5.1 Phases

**5.1.1  First Phase: Planning.** In this phase, the researcher firstly decided to plan unit 1 and unit 2, taking into account the number of hours per week and the number of sessions. Secondly, the

main activities were designed taking into account the four strategies (skimming, scanning, semantic maps and guessing the meaning), the stages of reading and the content of the books. Unit 1 is illustrated in table 4.

Table 4. Unit 1 of the Didactic sequence.

| Number of sessions | Activities |
| --- | --- |
| 1st session | Doing the pre-Reading activities (Brainstorming, creating mental images, presenting vocabulary). Understanding new vocabulary using context. |
| 2nd session | While- Reading activities (predicting, inquiring). Teaching how to skim and Scan. Going to the text and finding general and specific information. |
| 3rd session | Post- Reading activities (Discussing, connecting). Teaching how to create semantic maps. |
| 4th session | Doing maps choosing some parts of the book. In groups, socialize the maps. Then, Ss share their maps in front of the class (retell some parts of the story). Teacher collects the maps. |
| 5th session | Reading again the book individually and answer a set of questions (worksheet). (Teacher collects the copies). While students do this part, Teacher observes the Students and writes the journal. |
| 6th session | Giving feedback to students in groups. Then, to the whole class in form of discussion. |

**7th session**    With the content of the book (resolving a conflict) Ss think of an ongoing conflict in their home and try to see the problem from the perspective of Dr. Seuss and try to solve it.

**8th session**    Students reflect on the importance of resolving a conflict. Ss create some caring statements for somebody else. This will be a way to apologize and forgive others.

In the chart above, you can observe how the activities were distributed and how many sessions were planned for this first unit. However, this syllabus is a general look of what each session was about and the activities and strategies that participants did. In the following table is illustrated unit 2.

Table 5. Unit 2 of the Didactic sequence.

| No. of sessions | Activities |
|---|---|
| 1st session | **Pre- Reading activities:** introduction of the vocabulary (using flashcards with images). Brainstorming about the content of the book (looking at the cover of the book and some images) Exploring some stereotypes in fairy tales. |
| 2nd session | **Read aloud the first story of the book**. Teacher gives the opportunity to some Students to read some parts of the story. **While-reading activities:** Completing some information about the text on the board. (characters, author, title, problem, solution). |
| 3rd session | **Reading the second story of the book:** While students are reading along with the teacher. She asks some question to predict what will happen next in the story using the images. Then, Students will skim and scan through the story, in some pieces of paper will write the answers to some questions and paste |

them on the board. Teacher provides immediate feedback.

| | |
|---|---|
| **4th session** | **Reading the third story of the book:** While students are reading along with the teacher, they will highlight the main parts of the story. students will predict what will happen next just looking at the pictures of each page. Using the app Plickers students will answer a set of questions related to the story. |
| **5th session** | **For the last story of the book.** Students will do skimming and scanning and a semantic map at the end. Then, students will create their own maps. |
| **6thsession** | **Post-reading activities:** Students look for similarities and differences in each story and connect what happens in real life with stereotypes and in these fairy tales. Students do a think- tac-toe activity to practice some strategies. |
| **7th session** | Students do station work activities. |
| **8th session** | Last reading comprehension activity: Students read a text about Tetris individually and answer some questions in order to skim, scan and make inferences. |

In the second unit, the activities were more specified in each session. This helped the researcher to have an idea of how a lesson would look like. This was important when planning because the researcher could brainstorm easier. For the planning phase, a lesson plan was used to design each lesson, you can visualize this format in the appendices part.

**5.1.2   Second phase:  Acting.** In this phase, the researcher carried out the teaching process based on the unit 1 and 2 arranged in the previous step. In the development of the action, the teacher turned into the researcher as well. This acting phase needed two sessions in a week, one hour per each meeting or sometimes was one meeting of two hours. To develop this phase a variety of activities were designed and adapted to this study in order to implement and teach the

four reading strategies (skimming, scanning, semantic maps and guessing the meaning). In terms of the activities, it was important to develop each reading stage (pre-while-post reading) considering what Deyan & Yufen (2006) present for each stage.

To begin with a description of each activity, firstly each stage will be described. After that, the teaching model of the reading strategies will be presented. Finally, the activities implemented will be described, exemplified, and the content of the books will be briefly discussed.

**5.1.3   Reading Stages.** Pre-reading stage: During this stage was really important to introduce new vocabulary from the book and the stories participants were about to read, so they could activate schemata. In addition, during this stage was vital to make participants brainstorm about the content of the books. Questions were asked to activate previous knowledge and create some predictions about the stories. These activities were presented in form of slides or pictures from the books or words related to the stories.

While-reading stage: This stage was to read aloud the story and the assistance of the teacher was primordial when ensuring understanding of the text. The teacher read aloud every part of the story and while she was reading, she acted out and sometimes asked immediate questions to grant comprehension, for instance: what was this paragraph about? what happened to the princess? who was…...? During this stage, participants were predicting all the time and they felt encourage to participate on the reading. Finally, on this stage the sample had to remember the vocabulary introduced in the previous stage.

Post-reading stage: In this stage, participants had to demonstrate how much they understood the text by answering questions and applying the strategies learned (skimming, scanning, and semantic maps). Participants did different reading exercises in which they had to scan and skim.

They created semantic maps about the stories and clarified doubts related to unknown words. Finally, participants worked on the content of the books by doing different activities and discussions.

**5.1.4   Instructional model of comprehension strategies.** The following model was applied in order to instruct very well participants in the four reading strategies.
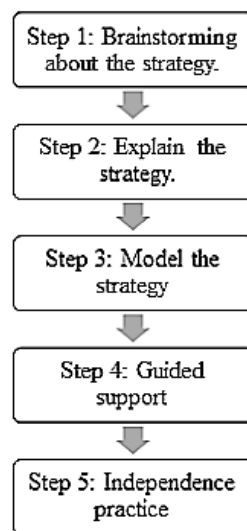


Figure 6. Instructional model of reading strategies

To teach three of the reading strategies implemented (skimming, scanning, semantic maps) was necessary to follow this instructional model presented by NSW Department of Education and Training (2010) in its article "*Teaching Comprehension Strategies*". This model was adapted to the needs of the present study. Firstly, participants were introduced to the strategy by showing some examples, pictures or even videos, and questions about each strategy. Once, the participants could understand the use of the strategy, the teacher- researcher proceeded to give them the name of the strategy.

Secondly, the teacher proceeded to explain each strategy very well. During the explanation of each strategy was essential to show examples and explain each one of them to grant

comprehension. Thirdly, each strategy was modeled by the teacher. With participants´ help and participation, she showed them how to skim, scan, guess the meaning of words and create semantic maps. Giving some parameters to follow and some important steps to easily skim, scan and the construction of maps. In the fourth step, participants worked in pairs to try putting in practice what the teacher just taught them. In the case of skimming and scanning, teacher read a short story and then gave three or four questions, so students had to skim and scan. Students guessed the meaning of words during the pre-reading stage and in here they activated schemata. In the case of semantic maps, they attempted to create a semantic map following the parameters. They worked collaboratively and the teacher monitored and helped them during the realization of the activity.

Finally, participants worked more independently in the fifth step, and they tried to do the corresponding strategy by themselves and just help was provided when someone asked for it.
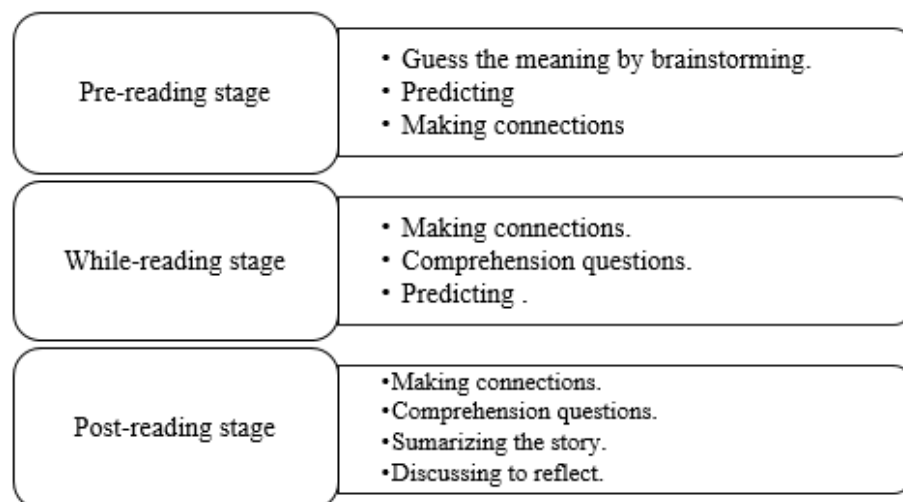
### 5.1.5   Reading Activities in the classroom



Figure 7. Organization of activities on each stage

- Guess the meaning by brainstorming: In this activity, the teacher presented the new vocabulary or phrases taken from the book and showed it to participants in form of images, or slides. The pictures or slides contained a visual representation of the word itself, and the sample had to guess the meaning of the word. Another way of presenting the vocabulary to get participants brainstormed was by showing the picture with the word that represented the image and at the same time the word in context. With the example participants could easily get the meaning of the word. For example, in the first unit, a digital dictionary was created and before reading the first book (as it contained many words that maybe participants were not going to be familiar with), it was presented to participants, once they guess the meaning of each word they practice the pronunciation of them and at the same time they created new sentences with the words. The main objective of this activity was familiarized participants with the vocabulary and the content of the books, so when they were reading the stories they could easily comprehend.

- Predicting: When making predictions, students imagine what comes next in the text, based on their background knowledge. "Students' predictions are based on their prior knowledge and experiences about the topic, the genre, and what has happened so far in the text (using both the print text and illustrations" (Hughes, 2007, p.1). This activity was done during the pre-reading stage and the while-reading stage. By showing some pictures from the books, the title, and the cover of the books, participants started making predictions about the content of books. They used their imagination to share what came to their minds and describe the pictures presented from each story. Additionally, when participants read each page from the books, the teacher-researcher made a short pause to ask them questions such as "What do you

think is going to happen next?", and participants shared their predictions. When they read the next page, they confirmed their predictions. The main objective of this activity was that participants got engaged in the reading tasks and encouraged learners to become active learners during the reading time.

- Making connections: When making connections students find meaning in a text by connecting it to their background knowledge and experiences. "Students relate to what they read by making connections to their own lives, to other texts they have read and to the things or events that occur in the world" (Hughes, 2007.par.6). This activity was done during the three stages of reading (pre-while-post reading). Participants were all the time making connections with the content of the books and the real world, or their own life experiences. In the first book "The butter Battle book", participants discussed about the importance of solving a conflict by negotiating and having a conversation. They connected the issue presented in this story with conflicts that happened in the past around the world, the consequences of them, and with problems and difficult situations that were happening currently in the country.

At the end of the first unit, participants created phrases in small pieces of notes and in those phrases, they apologized for something they did to someone that hurt them. " This was a nice moment, and I could feel students internalized and could really reflect on the importance of giving a second chance, forgiving and resolving a conflict by communicating"(Journal, Log# 9).This activity was important because participants were more interested in reading and they shared experiences and connected them with the stories they read.

- Comprehension questions: This activity became more frequent due to the constant practice in the strategies of skimming and scanning. This activity was presented to students in a variety of ways. Some activities were done in the traditional way. The teacher gave a set of questions to the participants and they had to answer them, then they corrected the answers by participating. Another way was by reading or showing participants the question and they had certain time to answer the question. This was to reinforce scanning and skimming, in here they had the restriction of time, so they had to answer faster and shared it to the class. Another way of answering questions was while they were reading, the teacher gave participants a little sticky note. Then, the teacher said the questions and participants had to figure out the answer and write it down on the piece of paper. After that, students pasted their answers on the board. Finally, the teacher read the different answers and pronounced the correct one.

  Lastly, they answered questions from the stories they read by using a virtual application (Plickers), Using some codes and pieces of paper they answered multiple-choice questions, their answers were scanned by the application and it showed immediately the correct answers. Participants enjoyed all the ways in which they had to answer questions because all the time they were participating. The purpose of these activities was to make participants practice the strategies learned.

- Summarizing the story: This activity was done during the post-reading stage. After all the pre-and while-reading activities, participants had to summarize the story by creating a semantic map. Participants took out relevant information from the stories such as: main characters, the setting, the problem and the solution to design the map that would sum up the

story. They knew they had to use just keywords and some other parameters that were taught

for instance: to create an outline and use some symbols such as lines and figures for it. The

main objective of this activity was to help participants identify the most important ideas from

the texts and restate them in their own words.

- Station work: This activity consisted of doing from five to six different activities in different

   stations around the classroom. The teacher designed different activities related to reading for

   each station. In the stations students had to read, create semantic maps, answer

   comprehension questions, play board games with questions from the stories read, organize

   sentences, and even do some predictions. During these activities, the teacher gave students

   time to complete each activity and rotate to the next station. In every station, participants had

   instructions to develop the activity, and the corresponding answer sheet to check their

   answers. They worked in groups of 4 to complete each activity. This activity was done

   during the post-reading stage and the main objective was to encourage all students to

   participate, work as a team, discover their skills, remember what they learned during the

   previous sessions, and put into practice every strategy learned.

- Discussing to reflect: In this activity, participants felt free to speak and expressed their

   opinions about the topics that were mostly discussed in both units (resolving a conflict and

   stereotypes). During this activity, participants gave their point of views, shared personal

   experiences and made some comparisons of how these topics were presented on the stories

   and how they were exposed in real life. Although, participants spoke most of the time in

   Spanish when discussing the topics, they had the right to do it, because the teacher noticed

   that sometimes they didn´t participate in classes because of the restriction of vocabulary they

had. Some things were asked to answer in English or Spanglish, however, the most important part was to make students conscious about these problems and they were able to give their own ideas about the topic.

**5.1.5 Third Phase: Observing.** This phase was carried out during the implementation of the didactic sequence, mostly during the realization of activities and the implementation of strategies in the classroom. For this phase was really important the use of the observation form (appendix, 3) and the use of the journal (appendix, 8) through these instruments was done the anecdotic observation. The teacher-researcher observed participants´ attitudes, responses to the questions, participation to the activities, teaching practices, and the effectiveness of the activities done during the didactic sequence.

**5.1.6  Fourth Phase: Reflecting.** This phase was done during all the implementation of the present research project. The teacher- researcher reflected all the time in every phase of the implementation. During the planning phase, the teacher reflected after each lesson using the notes of the journal, which allowed her to introduce changes to the unit and the activities previously planned. Then, in the acting phase reflection became more important. Every time the teacher-researcher had troubles with any activity in the classroom, reflection took place in order to analyze and correct the drawbacks found in every lesson or activity implemented. Also, reflection was relevant during the observing phase, everything the teacher observed was reflected on an observation form and when the class finished, it was converted in a form of reflection in the journal with some descriptions of the class, good and bad things that happened during the lessons. This helped improve every session, activity and teaching practices.

## 6.  Data Analysis and Results

### 6.1 Data Analysis

This section provides the analysis and interpretation of the collected data to find an answer to the research question: How does the explicit teaching of four reading strategies benefit students´ reading comprehension process? Subsequently, the analysis helped to answer the additional questions posted at the beginning of the present study. The first part will address the question: Which difficulties do students have in reading comprehension activities? Then, it will proceed to unravel the second question: Which elements of the pedagogical intervention will be suitable to improve students' reading comprehension? Finally, it will discuss the answer to the question: To what extent, the implemented strategies helped students comprehend a text?

Additionally, to interpret the data, it was necessary to create codes to represent the instruments, the activities and the tools used to answer each research question. Below, you have a look of each code created for the analysis.

**6.1.1   Data Coding.** The analysis of the data was executed through the construction of codes which emerged by studying the data. Each code was taken from relevant information or tools required during the implementation of the didactic sequence. The codes were divided into three parts: instruments, activities and participants. A code was assigned to each activity, instrument and participant, using some initials and the number of times it was done. To illustrate this, the code created for the lesson plans was (LP-SN), where L stands for lesson, P for plan, S for session and N for the number of each session. Thus, if the analysis shows something extracted from the first lesson plan, the code would be: LP-S01. In the case of the participants,

each one of them was coded as (PN) where P stands for participant and N stands for the number

given to each participant. As detailed below, you can appreciate each code for each category.

Table 6 shows the organization of the codes created during the analysis:

Table 6. Coding of the data

| *CATEGORY* | *CODES* |
| --- | --- |
| *Participants* | *P N (Participant- Number of participant) P01- P02-P03-etc.* |
| *Activities* | *Reading comprehension activities (RCA) + AN (Activity Number) +PN (Participant Number) e.g. RCA-A01-P1* |
| | *Semantic maps activities (SEM) + (AN) Activity number e.g. SEM A01* |
| | *Predicting activities (P) + (AN) Activity number e.g.          P-A02* |
| | *Vocabulary brainstorm activities (VB) + (AN) Number of activities e.g. VB-A01* |
| | *Discussion Activities (D) + (AN) e.g. D-A01* |
| | *while reading checklist (WRC)+ PN e.g. WRC-P1* |
| | *semantic map checklist (SMC) +PN e.g. SMC-P2* |
| *Instruments* | *Journal (J)+ Number of log (L) e.g. J-L01* |
| | *Focus group interview (FGI)+ (PN) Participant number e.g. FGI-P01* |

These codes were created with the purpose of simplifying the process of classification. To continue with the analysis of the data it was important to separate the information and classify it into different categories. Below, it is explained and described how this categorization took place.

**6.1.2 Categorizing Data.** To categorize the data, it was important to bear in mind the secondary questions posted at the beginning of the study (Which difficulties do students have in reading comprehension activities?, Which elements of the pedagogical intervention will be suitable to improve students' reading comprehension?, To what extent, the implemented strategies helped students comprehend a text?), the data collection instruments, and the type of analysis that was used to answer each of the questions posted. Table 7 illustrates the three questions with the corresponding instruments and the type of analysis.

Table 7. Categorization of the data

| Questions | Data Collection Instruments | Type of Analysis | Categories |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1. Which difficulties do students have in reading comprehension activities?** | **1.1. Pre-test** | Quantitative analysis | *-Finding main ideas.* *-Finding specific info.* *-Inferring* |
| | **1.2. Observation** | Qualitative-content analysis | *-Comprehension of texts.* *-Understanding of new vocabulary.* *-Lack of strategies and enthusiasm in reading.* |
| | | | *-Skimming and scanning.* |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **2.1. Checklist** | Quantitative analysis | *-Open-ended questions.* *Multiple-choice questions.* *- Skimming and scanning activities.* |
| | **2.2. Observation** | | *-Semantic map activities.* *-Predicting activities.* *-Vocabulary activities.* |
| **2. Which elements of the pedagogical intervention will be suitable to improve students reading comprehension?** | **2.3. Classroom documents** | Qualitative-content analysis | *-Reading comprehension Activities.* *-Semantic map activities.* *-Summarizing relevant information.* |
| | **2.4. Rubric** | | *- Realization of maps.* *-Students´ improvement.* |
| | **2.5. Journal** | | *-Students´ attitudes and interest.* *-Teaching strategies and teaching practices.* *- Books´ content.* |
| **3. To what extent, the implemented strategies helped students comprehend a text?** | **3.1. Post-test** | Quantitative analysis | *- Specific information.* *-Main ideas in a text.* |
| | **3.2. Focus-group interview** | Qualitative-content analysis | *-Students´ perceptions about reading.* *-Students´ perceptions* |

| | *about the activities and sessions.* |
| | *-Students´ perceptions about the books.* |
| | *-Strategies importance and effectiveness.* |
| | *- Students' assessment of the implementation.* |

As it can be observed in table 7, the first column displays the three secondary questions of the present study. The second column presents the data collection instruments that were used during the implementation in order to give an explanation to the questions. The third column presents the type of analysis done to each instrument. Finally, the last column represents the categories that emerged during the analysis.

Considering what was stated before, the results are presented in the following way: first, the findings of the pre-test and the observation are described by taking into consideration what students answered on the test and the evidence found in the observations. Second, the checklist and the rubric are presented to show how students improved reading comprehension through the use of the strategies taught. After that, the observations, classroom documents, and the journal were analyzed in order to show and demonstrate the improvement students had from the first to the last session of the didactic sequence in the use of reading comprehension strategies. Finally, in the third part of the analysis the post-test is presented to compare students' performance before and after the explicit teaching and practice of the selected reading strategies. Also, the focus-group interview was analyzed in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the strategies,

students' perceptions, opinions and assessment on the strategies, activities, and the didactic sequence.

In the following part, a precise description of the data obtained from the instruments named previously is presented:

## 6.2 Results

This part of the paper corresponds to the interpretation of the results obtained from the pre-test, observations, checklist, rubric, classroom documents, journal, post-test and focus-group interview. The data collected from the pre-test and post-test was used to determine how the use of four reading strategies (skim, scan, guess the meaning and semantic maps) benefit fourth-graders´ reading comprehension process. In the following paragraphs, every instrument will be presented and analyzed in order to answer all the questions posted in the study by showing the different categories that emerged during the analysis.

**6.2.1   Pre-test.** Before starting the didactic sequence, it was observed that students struggled with reading comprehension. To validate this information, the researcher decided to apply a pre-test (appendix 4) to determine students' reading comprehension problems. The test was collected and analyzed in order to find which difficulties students had when reading texts.

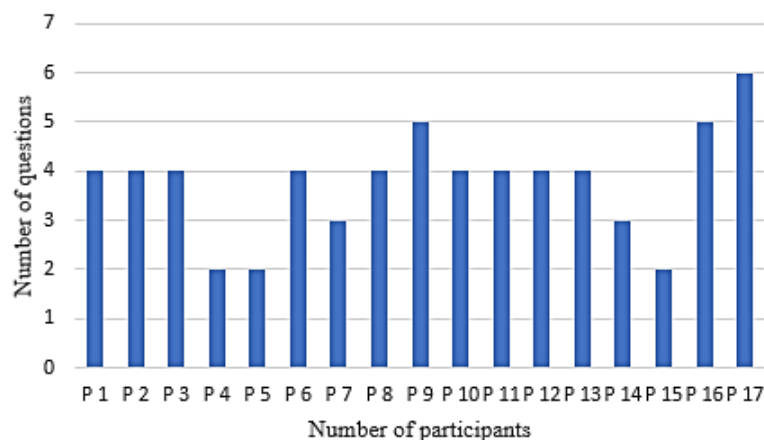Figure 8 shows the performance of students in the pre-test.

Figure 8. pre-test results

The figure 8 shows the pre-test results from 17 participants. The Y axis represents the total

number of questions in the test while the X axis represents the total number of participants. The

pre-test consisted of seven questions and as it was presented previously. each question aimed to

work a specific strategy (skimming, scanning or inference). The chart shows that the highest

score was 6, which means that P17 got 6 questions correctly out of 8. While the lowest score was

from P4, P5 and P15 in which they got 2, meaning they answered 2 questions correctly out of 8.

The rest of participants answered on average from 3 to 4 questions correctly. Thus, none of the

students answered all the questions correctly and it can be concluded that the participants'

reading comprehension aspects were low and needed improvement.

To sum up, the analyzed data revealed and confirmed that students had difficulties answering

reading comprehension questions in which they had to find not only general information, but

also specific information and inference. With this pre-test, the researcher could identify

specifically the problems students had in reading comprehension. From these difficulties, the

teacher-researcher decided to act and start a didactic sequence in which students could improve

their performance in reading comprehension activities.

**6.2.2   Anecdotal observation before the didactic sequence.** Before the test was administered to students, it was important to have a previous look to their difficulties. This was done through an anecdotal observation in the classes, especially during the individual activities and exams days. From the observations, it was concluded that:

**Comprehension of texts**

- When they had reading comprehension questions, the majority of students did not comprehend the questions because of the lack of vocabulary they had and their low understanding of it.

- In multiple choice questions, students demonstrated that in questions for general knowledge or inferring they just chose the answers randomly.

- Very few students showed to have the capacity to answer either multiple or open-ended questions. These students were taking English courses or extra English hours out of school.

**Understanding new vocabulary**

- Students were asking for the meaning of many words all the time when they had to read silently.

- When they had to answer open-ended questions, they asked "How do you say…. in English?", so they could answer the questions.

**Lack of strategies and enthusiasm in reading**

- Students got used to being told the answers in the reading activities by the teacher, so they just waited for the teacher to give the correct answers and copy them from the board.

- Students could not infer or give reason in some answers because they did not have any strategy to get to the answer.

- Some of the students did not even read the texts at all; they did not show enthusiasm or motivation when reading.

From these findings it was concluded that students needed improvement in reading comprehension strategies and activities which motivate them to read and comprehend a text. To continue with the analysis, the next paragraphs will focus on the activities and the instruments used during the didactic sequence, in order to find a solution to the second question: Which elements of the pedagogical intervention will be suitable to improve students' reading comprehension?

**6.2.3  Observations during the didactic sequence.** Through the implementation of the didactic sequence the teacher-researcher was attentive to students' attitudes, responses, participation, and motivation during the activities. To register this behavior the teacher-researcher decided to do observations and take notes about all the responses students showed during each activity. Next, what the observations registered during the didactic sequence is interpreted.

- Skimming and Scanning reading comprehension activities (RCA):

*Observations from session 1 to session 7 -Unit 01*

From the first session to the last session of unit 1 participants showed an improvement in their reading skills and a better performance when finding general and specific information in the texts. Once skimming and scanning strategies were implemented, they started using them from the very beginning. During the class sessions they were asked to implement some techniques that were taught for each strategy. In the case of skimming, they sometimes had to check the title, images or read just the first paragraph of the texts and the last lines of the texts to know the main

idea of them. In the case of scanning, they had to read more carefully, and highlight key words in the questions so it would be easier to find the answers.

Through the analysis of the observations (See Appendix, 3) of unit 1, it was evident that participants experienced difficulties during the first sessions and some of them were shy and did not participate much. Then, participants started to perform better and they participated more at the end of session 7 of Unit 1.

Table 8. Observation Findings from session 1 to 7 - Unit 01

| Observations | Findings |
|---|---|
| UN-01-OBS-02 | • During this first activities, a lack of confidence was found in some students at the moment of answering comprehension questions. <br><br> • Participants asked for approval. Also, it was noticed a lack of critical thinking and a difficulty when giving an answer using their own words, or giving a summary, because of the lack of vocabulary they had. |
| UN-01-OBS-03 | • During pair work, Participants were more active during the class and they helped each other. <br><br> • Participants liked working in groups a lot, they supported each other easily and they finished sometimes the tasks faster than when they did them individually. They got feedback from their classmates and they corrected their own answers. |
| UN-01-OBS- | • The majority of participants did the RCA by themselves without |

| 06 | asking the teacher for help. |
| | • Participants worked really well in pairs and they were really engaged. They worked independently without asking questions to the T (teacher) about the strategies or the questions. |
| | • The majority of participants could skim satisfactorily but they still showed some difficulties with some specific questions. |
| | • Having a multiple-choice activity helped participants get answers easier than when they had open-ended questions. |

*Observations from Session 1 to session 8- Unit 02*

Through the analysis of the observations (See, Appendix, 3) of unit 2, it was shown that participants were more active and the shyest students started to participate more during the sessions and take part in the development of the class. They performed much better in the last sessions of the second unit, especially when they had multiple-choice questions.

Table 9. Observation Findings from session 1 to 8 - Unit 02

| Observations | Findings |
|---|---|
| UN-02-OBS-02 | • The reason why participants found to answer open-ended questions about general and specific information really difficult was because of the lack of vocabulary they had. |

| UN-02-OBS-03 | • When participants had to say their answers aloud and they corrected them among themselves in whole group activities they were more active and felt more confident to share their answers. |
| | • In open-ended questions participants found more difficult to answer questions about main ideas. |
| | • Some participants showed a great improvement in skimming and scanning and a deep understanding of the texts. |
| UN-02-OBS-04 | • The use of technology made students participate more and feel curious about the activities. |
| | • It was found that it was an advantage when students had multiple choice exercises so they got the correct answer easier, but when they had to write the answers by themselves, it took more time and much effort. |
| | • Participants showed more understanding of the texts and used the strategies learned. |
| UN-02-OBS-06 | • Participants were motivated, participated more, worked independently, and enjoyed reading when they had a choice and they could choose what to do. |
| UN-02-OBS-08 | • Participants worked independently, they completed the RCA individually, and they showed an improvement in their answers. |

They used the techniques learned to skim and scan.

- Semantic maps activities (SEM)

*Observation Sessions from Unit 1 and Unit 2*

In the first unit of the didactic sequence, participants learned some steps to create semantic maps and some parameters for the design of them. Through the use of the maps, participants could identify specific information and general ideas from the texts and the stories read. Participants showed an improvement in the way they constructed their first map to the last map. The first maps were very incomplete and some of them were saturated with a lot of information, they did not use colors, symbols or an outline. In the last maps they showed better results and the information was clearer and summarized in a more comprehensible way.

Table 101. Semantic maps - observation findings

**Findings**

- The majority of participants highlighted relevant information from the text to construct the maps.

- During the realization of the first maps there were no colors, or extra figures and they did not construct an outline (see on page 77).

- The majority of the participants could complete their maps individually using the first book "The Butter Battle Book". Although, the teacher was monitoring and helping some of the participants with the construction of the maps.

- In the pair work activity, Participants created a much better map with the help of their

partner. When they did feedback among themselves, they worked more independently and got more engaged in the activity.

- In the resolution of the last map from the second book "Snow-White stories around the world", the majority of participants completed the map with relevant information and used the outline to complete it and the parameters taught to design it.

- Predicting activities (P):

*Observation Sessions from Unit 1 and Unit 2*

The analysis of the observations showed that in the first sessions participants were really shy and did not feel motivated to participate during predicting activities. These activities were mostly done before and during the reading of the books. In the second unit, participants were more willing to participate and express their ideas taking into account what they previously knew and what they observed from the images presented.

Table 11. Predicting activities findings

| Observations | Findings |
| --- | --- |
| *UN-01-OBS-02* | - The majority of students participated actively, shared their opinions and ideas. They felt free to speak. |
| | - Some of the participants showed a lot of shyness during the first predicting activities. |
| *UN-01-OBS-* | - This kind of activities helped activate schemata and made |

| | |
|---|---|
| *03* | students brainstorm. Participants were more motivated and they all wanted to participate in the activity, because they did not feel under pressure. |
| *UN-02-OBS-01* | • The shyest participants were more willing to participate and felt free to speak and share their predictions about the book they were going to read. |
| *UN-02-OBS-02* | • During the while-reading stage, it was found that reading aloud helped participants to be part of the class and that they could understand easily when they predicted and summarized each page of the books. |

• Vocabulary brainstorming activities (VB)

*Observation Sessions from Unit 1 and Unit 2*

During these activities, the strategy which consisted of guessing the meaning was developed and it was primordial for the understanding of the content of the books before participants started reading them. Participants had to guess the meaning of the words presented many times in flashcards or slides by looking at some pictures and the word itself, or looking at the image and one example in context. From the observations´ analysis, it could be found that:

Table 12. Vocabulary brainstorming activities Observation findings.

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**Findings**

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- During these activities, participants did some drilling and created their own sentences. This helped them understand the words much better and remember them.

- For participants, it was easier to understand the meaning of a word when they could associate the meaning of it with a picture. For them, it was easier to get the meaning of the word when they had a picture of the word or when the teacher provided an example.

- This strategy really helped participants contextualize themselves about the story they were about to read and when participants previewed the words while they were reading, it was much easier to comprehend the problem, the setting, and the ending of the stories.

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Continuing with the analysis to validate the information taken from the observations, it was important to analyze and interpret the classroom documents that were collected. To help the analysis of the classroom documents, it was necessary the use of a checklist for the reading comprehension activities and a rubric for the semantic maps. Below, it is described the analysis of the classroom documents, the checklist, and the rubric.

**6.2.3 Classroom documents**

To verify the information taken from the observations, it was important to collect all the classroom documents students did during the implementation. From these documents, it could be concluded that:

- *Documents from RCA (Reading Comprehension Activities)*

From the reading comprehension activities, a progressive improvement and a change in students'

answers was shown, however, most of them showed difficulty when they had to write answers

with their own words. On the other hand, when students had to answer multiple-choice

questions, they did better. At the beginning, students forgot to use the strategies learned when

doing skimming and scanning because it was not reflected on the activities. Then, they showed

an improvement and they got better results. For instance, they highlighted relevant information

on the texts, and highlighted keywords on the questions. This demonstrated that students were

using the techniques learned. Below, the next figures show some of the work done during the
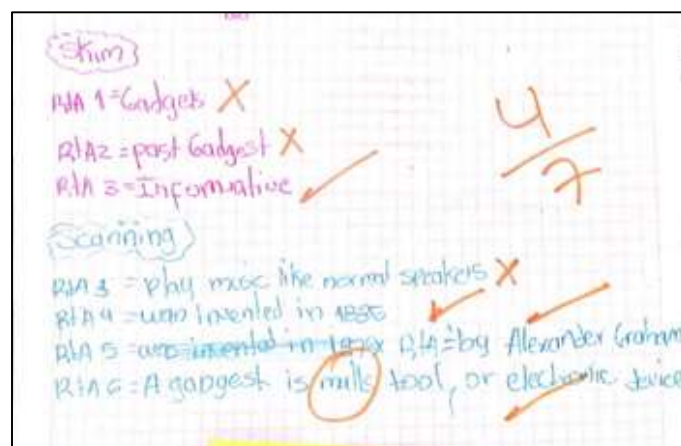
reading activities:



Figure 9 RCA - A01-P15

Figure 10 RCA - A03 - P12P09



Figure 11. RCA - A05-P15

Figure 12. RCA-A04-P04



Figure 13. RCA - A07-P12

As it can be observed in figures 9, 10, and 11, they showed difficulties answering open-ended

questions; they gave very incomplete answers and they did not highlight any words on the texts.

On the contrary, in figure 12 and 13, students put into practice the strategies learned during the implementation. In both texts there are some keywords highlighted that helped them easily identify specific information on the text. On figure 12, they also highlighted relevant information on the text and on each question. They showed better performances in multiple-choice activities specially in scanning.

- *Documents from SEM (Semantic Maps Activities)*

As well as the reading comprehension activities, in the semantic maps activities students showed some improvement on the fulfillment of their maps. At the beginning, they did the first maps just with their background knowledge, they demonstrated not to have any organization to do a map, and the majority of the participants wrote down too much information on their maps. Once they were taught how to use a map and how to construct, organize and complete it, they showed little by little some improvements, especially in the way they organized the information, the use of the symbols they learned and the amount of information they wrote down on their maps later on. The following figures show some of the performance students had while doing their maps.
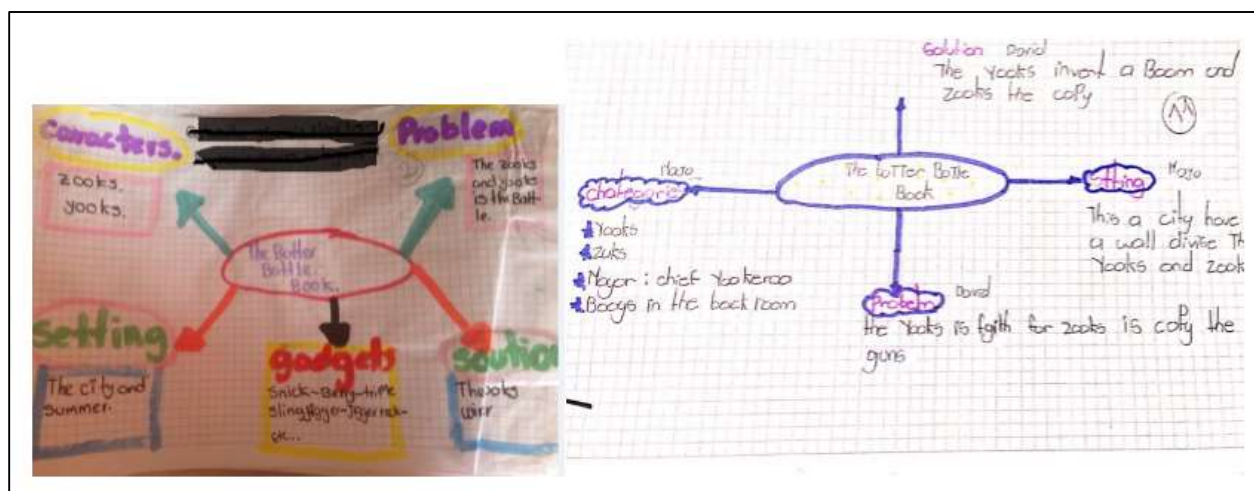


Figure 14 SEM-A02-P08-P10

Figure 15 SEM-A04-P09
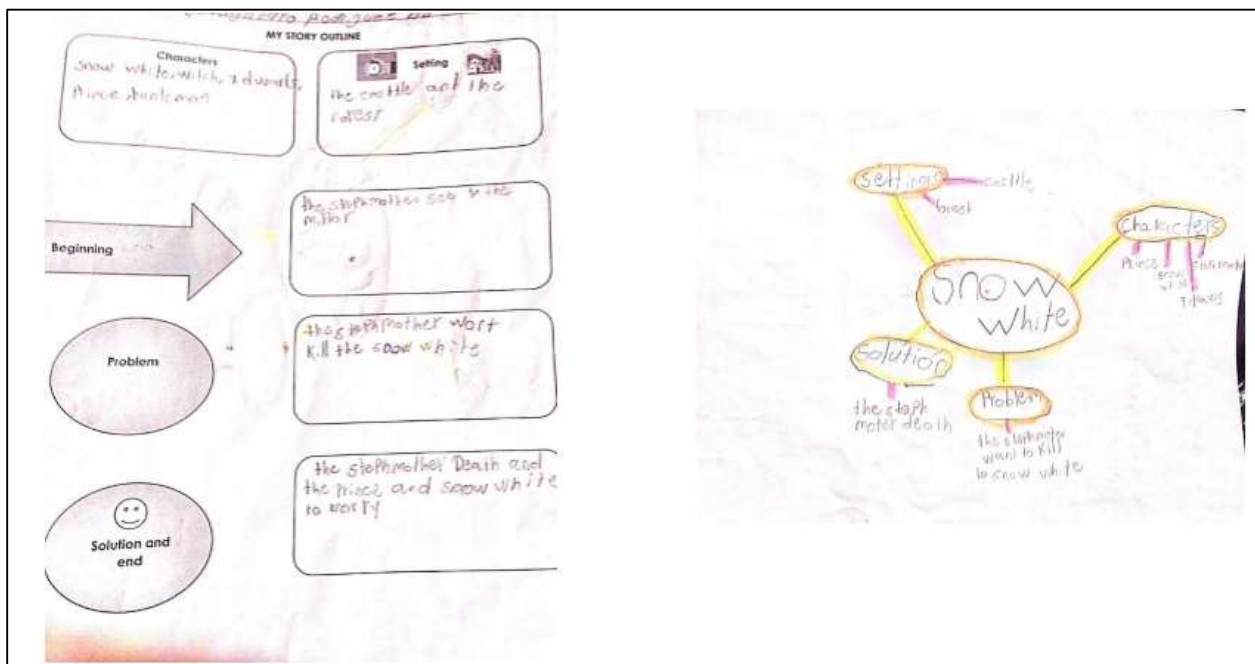


Figure 16 SEM-A06-P14

From the first map, students showed a slight improvement in the way they organized the

information on the map, some parameters they started to use were colors, symbols like squares,

circles, and ovals to do titles, subtitles or put extra information from the texts. In the first maps, the information was incomplete. In the subsequent maps, they started to do outlines first, they tried to write the information with their own words and they just put down relevant information using keywords.

The most important part about the activities was that students were able to retell the stories again with the maps they did.

**6.2.4 Journal.** The journal was especially important for the phase of reflection. It helped the teacher-researcher to observe better specific details on students' behaviors and attitudes towards the sessions and it helped her reflect on her own teaching practices. With the journal, the teacher-researcher analyzed deeper benefits, drawbacks, and things that did not work in a session, so they could be improved for the next ones. Some of the results found from the journal were:

*Students' improvement*

- Students definitely showed an improvement from the first sessions to the last ones. "This time the maps were more complete and much better than the ones they did before" (Journal, log -7)

- Pair work activities helped students to work collaboratively and help each other.

- In the second unit, students demonstrated a better understanding of the texts that were read and they did the majority of the activities (reading comprehension questions and semantic maps) on their own.

*Students' attitudes and interest in the activities*

- As in every session the main goal of the lesson was written on the board, participants tried to achieve the main goal in every class using an achievement chart. This helped keep students interested in the sessions.

- The teacher-researcher motivated the students in different ways, so they would like reading and they could feel excited when doing reading exercises. "I decided to look for a strategy to motivate my students more… I decided to create an achievement chart." (Journal, 10).

- Technology motivated students and made them read and do the reading exercises easier and as a whole group. They were excited every time they knew they were going to use technology to answer questions. "I think that using technology for teaching strategies help the teacher motivate their students and make them more curious about reading" (Journal, log-15).

- Doing station activities helped students to work independently and collaboratively with their classmates, they feel motivated and interested in the sessions because in each session they work different intelligences and they did different activities related to the reading texts. "I could notice that this kind of activities help students to be more interested in reading by doing different activities" (Journal, Log-17).

*Teaching strategies and teaching practices*

- Monitoring became an important part of the class, especially when students started individual work.

- The teacher-researcher made changes in their planners, activities, and instruments when she noticed they were not working in the best way.

- Feedback played an important part in every session. Once participants finished activities, the teacher-researcher provided feedback along with the rest of students and the exercises were corrected and discussed. "We corrected the answers if they were wrong. Feedback was given immediately in form of discussions". (Journal, log-13)

- About the teaching practices, the teacher-researcher realized the importance of having a variety of ways of teaching, the importance of being in constant change by improving the activities that went wrong and the importance of doing a well- organized lesson plan. "I could notice that as a teacher, I needed to look for more ways of catching my students' interest." (Journal, log- 18). "I need to plan my lessons better. Sometimes, I'm very ambitious and I can't finish the activities I plan for a day" (Journal, Log- 18).

*Books' content*

- The content of the books let students feel free to speak and participate more during the sessions of discussion, they felt interested in the content of the books due to the fact that they recalled personal experiences and they connected the themes that were discussed (conflicts, stereotypes) with their personal experiences. "I have noticed that when they can speak freely, they give their point of view about any topic." (Journal, Log-11). Besides, participants not only felt free to speak and took part in the sessions but also, they internalized and reflected upon the topics that were discussed. "I could feel students internalized and could really reflected on the importance of giving a second chance, forgiving and solving a conflict". (Journal, Log-9).

**6.2.5 Checklist Analysis.** The analysis of the checklist showed some improvements and better performances in some of the descriptors presented in the checklist. During the first activities,

participants demonstrated their difficulties in reading comprehension. Then, they started to overcome some difficulties and showed a better performance using the steps and techniques taught for the strategies of skimming and scanning. As detailed below, the scores participants got from the while-reading activities are presented. Each table displays a brief analysis of the checklist:

Table 13. Reading results of RCA -01

| Topic: Gadgets | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity 01 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 13 |
| | P2 | 13 |
| | P3 | 11 |
| | P4 | 10 |
| Students read a text about | P5 | 12 |
| gadgets in the past and present | P6 | 11 |
| from their textbooks, then they | P7 | 9 |
| answered questions to skim and | P8 | 13 |
| scan. The questions were open- | P9 | 11 |
| ended questions. | P10 | 13 |
| | P11 | 11 |
| Pair work activity. | P12 | 13 |
| | P13 | 12 |
| Assisted activity by the teacher. | P14 | 9 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | P15 | 9 |
| | P16 | 12 |
| | P17 | 11 |

In the chart above, the results of the first reading activity that students did in the didactic sequence are shown. The text was taken from their textbooks and they did this first activity in pairs. To answer each question, the teacher oriented them and helped them by giving examples. The total score of the checklist is 18. In this activity, it is observed that none of the students got the maximum score (18). The highest score was 13 and the lowest score was 9. In the same way, the following tables from the other tasks are presented.

Table 14.. Reading results of RCA-02

| Topic: Comic the round table | | |
|---|---|---|
| Activity 02 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 9 |
| | P2 | 9 |
| | P3 | 9 |
| | P4 | 10 |
| Students read individually a text | P5 | 10 |
| about "The round table" from | P6 | 10 |
| their textbooks, then they | P7 | 9 |
| answered questions to skim and | P8 | 11 |
| scan. The questions were open- | P9 | 10 |

| ended questions. | P10 | 10 |
|---|---|---|
| | P11 | 9 |
| Individual activity. | P12 | 10 |
| | P13 | 11 |
| Independent activity. | P14 | 9 |
| | P15 | 10 |
| | P16 | 11 |
| | P17 | 11 |

In this activity, students demonstrated great difficulty in answering open-ended questions individually and without much help from the teacher. This time they worked more independently and many of the answers were incomplete. In this case the highest score was 11 and the lowest score was 9.

Table 15. Reading results of RCA-03

| Topic: The butter battle book | | |
|---|---|---|
| Activity 03 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 14 |
| | P2 | 13 |
| | P3 | 14 |
| | P4 | 14 |
| Students read again the book "the | P5 | 16 |
| butter battle book" and answered | P6 | 14 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| a set of multiple-questions. | P7 | 11 |
| | P8 | 14 |
| Pair work activity. | P9 | 14 |
| | P10 | 11 |
| Independent activity. | P11 | 13 |
| | P12 | 16 |
| | P13 | 13 |
| | P14 | 11 |
| | P15 | 11 |
| | P16 | 14 |
| | P17 | 14 |

In activity three, students showed a slight improvement. They showed a better performance in multiple-choice activities. They could identify more easily specific information than general ideas, however, they continued forgetting to highlight relevant information, and key words on the questions and texts. The highest score was 16 and the lowest score was 11 out of 18 points.

Table 16. Reading results of RCA-04

| Topic: The creation of the sun | | |
|---|---|---|
| Activity 04 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 11 |
| | P2 | 11 |
| | P3 | 10 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | P4 | 11 |
| Students read a story form their | P5 | 13 |
| textbooks, and answered a set of | P6 | 9 |
| open-ended questions in their | P7 | 10 |
| notebooks. | P8 | 13 |
| | P9 | 11 |
| Individual activity. | P10 | 11 |
| | P11 | 12 |
| Independent activity. | P12 | 12 |
| | P13 | 10 |
| | P14 | 12 |
| | P15 | 12 |
| | P16 | 11 |
| | P17 | 13 |

One more time, students showed some difficulties with open-ended questions. For participants was really difficult to find and write with their own words the main idea of the texts. However, this time they started to highlight key words in each question to extract specific information and some of the participants highlighted relevant information on the texts as well. In this case, the checklist was evaluated over 15 because one descriptor did not match with the activity. Comparing the scores obtained in activity 2, students demonstrated an improvement answering open-ended questions.

Table 17. Reading results of RCA-05

| Topic: Snow white | | |
|---|---|---|
| Activity 05 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 14 |
| | P2 | 13 |
| | P3 | 13 |
| | P4 | 12 |
| Students read one of the stories of | P5 | 14 |
| the book "Snow white stories | P6 | Absent |
| around the world" and answered a | P7 | 11 |
| set of open-ended questions. | P8 | 12 |
| | P9 | 16 |
| Individual activity. | P10 | 14 |
| | P11 | 12 |
| Independent activity. | P12 | 12 |
| | P13 | 13 |
| | P14 | 12 |
| | P15 | 12 |
| | P16 | 12 |
| | P17 | 12 |

The majority of participants could skim and scan in this activity, just few of them could not skim because they were not able to write the answer with their own words. This time, they highlighted more information and keywords to find an answer to the questions. The highest score was 16 and the lowest score was 11. This shows a slight improvement in students' performance in reading activities compared to the previous activities.

Table 18. Reading results of RCA-06

| Topic: Snow white | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activity 06 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 15 |
| | P2 | 12 |
| | P3 | 13 |
| | P4 | 14 |
| Students read another story of the | P5 | 14 |
| book "Snow white stories around | P6 | 10 |
| the world" and answered a set of | P7 | 12 |
| multiple-choice questions in the | P8 | 13 |
| app Plickers. | P9 | 14 |
| | P10 | 15 |
| Individual activity. | P11 | 13 |
| | P12 | 13 |
| Independent activity. | P13 | 14 |
| | P14 | 13 |

| | P15 | 13 |
|---|---|---|
| | P16 | 13 |
| | P17 | 13 |

Compared to the first three activities, in this activity participants showed better performances with higher scores. For this activity, just 5 descriptors out of 6 were evaluated, which means that the maximum score to obtain was 15. In this activity, two participants (P1, P10) reached the highest score and the rest of them were very close. One of the participants (P6) obtained the lowest score (10). Again, participants demonstrated better results when answering multiple choice questions.

Table 19. Reading results of RCA-07

| Topic: Tetris reading | | |
|---|---|---|
| Activity 07 | N° Participant | Score |
| | P1 | 18 |
| | P2 | 18 |
| | P3 | 14 |
| | P4 | 14 |
| Students read a short text to | P5 | 18 |
| practice more reading strategies, | P6 | 17 |
| they answered a set of multiple- | P7 | 18 |
| choice questions. | P8 | 17 |
| Individual activity. | P9 | 14 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | P10 | 18 |
| Independent activity. | P11 | 14 |
| | P12 | 17 |
| | P13 | 17 |
| | P14 | 16 |
| | P15 | 16 |
| | P16 | 18 |
| | P17 | 18 |

In this activity, it is observed that 7 students out of 17 obtained the highest score (18). They could satisfactorily find general, and specific information and do other strategies such as highlight relevant information, and identify the author's purpose. 6 of the participants were very close to the highest score and just 4 participants got a 14 out of 18. Although not all participants reached the highest score in the last activity, they demonstrated improvements in the process of reading and the implementation of strategies. Taking into consideration the analysis of the activities previously presented, it can be said that:

Table 20. Checklists general results

| Category | Result |
|---|---|
| Skimming | • The majority of students could satisfactorily skim and find general information on the texts. Some of them still demonstrated some difficulties to find answer to questions such: what is the text about? What is the main idea of the text? |

| Scanning | • In general, students found specific information when they started to implement the techniques learned such: highlight keywords.<br><br>• Students could recognize question words like: what, where, when, and why. |
| --- | --- |
| Multiple-choice questions | • When students had multiple-choice questions, they could answer them easily. As it was presented some options to one question, they could check the text and search for those possible responses on the texts. |
| Open-ended questions | • This type of question was difficult to answer for students, because they did not have enough vocabulary to respond a question on their own.<br><br>• They could not answer open-ended questions when they had to skim and extract general information from the texts. |

Practice benefited students´ reading skills and made them use reading strategies when reading. Finally, the rubric to evaluate how well students performed during the process of the semantic maps they did during the implementation was analyzed. Below, there is a detailed analysis of the rubrics.

**6.2.6   Rubric Analysis.** The analysis of the rubric showed some improvements in the creation of semantic maps after reading the texts. Participants learned to do an outline and to extract specific and relevant information from the stories. Below, a detailed analysis of the rubrics from the first semantic map activity and the last one is presented. The data was analyzed and synthesized regarding the descriptors depicted on the rubric. (Appendix 7). Each descriptor had a value from 1 to 5, in which 1 means that the participant was not ready with the descriptor and 5

means that the participant did a great job developing the descriptor. In the following table, the

results of the first activity are analyzed and in the next table.

Table 21. SEM-A01 Frequency table of results.

| Category | Descriptor | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| **highlights** | Does not highlight any keyword, nor relevant information. (Not ready,1) | 17 |
| **Outline and steps** | Follows some of the steps for the creation of maps but does not create any outline. (Needs more, 2) | 17 |
| **Keywords** | Uses a few key words, relevant phrases or sentences for the creation of map. (Average, 3) | 14 |
| **Main categories** | Organizes the map by a few categories and seems incomplete. (Needs more,2) | 17 |
| **Organization** | The map is organized but it's difficult to summarize the story for the lack of information. (Average, 3) | 13 |
| **Creation** | Uses few symbols, images, colors, or arrows for the creation of the maps. (Needs more, 2) | 15 |

Table 21 shows a frequency of each descriptor in the first semantic map activity that

participants carried out. This activity was done without any instruction. The category represents

the criterion presented on the rubric, the descriptors were the descriptions given to each criterion

(these change according to the value they have) and the frequency column corresponds to the

number of participants who completed the same descriptor. Regarding the table above, it can be

said that: 1) All of the participants did not highlight any information on the text. 2) All the

participants followed the steps they knew when constructing their maps, but none of them did an

outline. 3) 14 out of 17 participants used a few keywords, relevant phrases, or the necessary

information to complete their maps. 4) All of the participants wrote some categories to organize

the map but the categories were not the best ones or they were incomplete. 5) 13 out of 17

participants had their maps organized but as they had incomplete categories or the categories

were not correct, the texts were difficult to summarize. 6) 15 out of 17 participants used few

symbols, colors or images for their maps. The majority of the maps were drawn with pencil or

pen, and they did not trace lines to separate and categorize information. Next table shows the

results of the last map students did.

Table 22. SEM-A06 Frequency table of results

| Category | Descriptor | Frequency |
|---|---|---|
| **highlights** | Highlights key words and all the relevant information in the text. (Great, 5) | 17 |
| **Outline and steps** | Follows every step learned when creating maps, and uses them to create an outline. (Great, 5) | 17 |
| **Keywords** | Uses some key words, relevant phrases or sentences for the creation of maps. (Good, 4) | 14 |
| **Main categories** | Organizes the map by all the categories learned. (Good, 4) | 12 |

| Organization | The map is well-organized and the story can be summarized by reading the map. (Great, 5) | 14 |
| Creation | Uses symbols, images, pictures, colors, or arrows for the creation of the map. (Good, 4) | 14 |

As it is observed in the table above, students performed much better in the execution of the last map. According to the number of frequency can be concluded that: 1) All the participants highlighted the information they needed for the construction of their maps. 2) In terms of the outline, all the participants completed and did the corresponding outline to complete their maps. This time, the outlines were better constructed and the information was completed. 3) 14 out of 17 participants got 4, in the category of keywords because they used some keywords, relevant phrases and the necessary information for their maps. 4) 12 out of 17 participants organized their maps in the categories learned during the didactic sequence. 5) 14 out of 17 participants had their maps well-organized with enough information and the right categories so they could use them to retell their stories. 6) 14 out of 17 participants used symbols, images, or colors to illustrate, divide and organize the information on their maps.

Comparing both tables, participants had a better performance in the last activity compared to the first one. The majority of participants did more completed and organized maps.

Taking into account the previous analysis and results it can be concluded that:

- Participants understood and noticed that highlighting keywords and information on their texts helped them respond to the teacher's questions more effectively and complete their maps.

- Participants showed an improvement on the execution of their outlines through the implementation phase. On the first maps, they did not do or complete the outlines given by the teacher. However, on the last maps, they completed them easily and they showed better results on the production of the maps using the information they had written on their outlines.

- When writing the first maps, the majority of participants put down too much information on their maps. Students showed some difficulty in extracting information from the texts and wrote it on the map with their own words. Especially, on the categories of "the problem of the story" and "the ending of the story".

- In the execution of the first maps, participants did not use any symbols or colors to separate and organize their ideas. However, during the learning process, participants noticed how important the use of colors, symbols and images were. They noticed how the use of pictures and symbols helped them to remember what happened on the stories more effectively than words.

Taking into consideration the analysis presented above, Table 23 presents general conclusions derived from the data obtained from the rubrics.

Table 23. General results of Semantic Maps Rubrics.

| Category | Results |
|---|---|
| Summarizing relevant information | • The use of an outline helped students extract relevant information from the texts and just put down on their maps the information that was necessary.<br>• Highlighting helped participants, a lot. Not only finding easily the information the needed, but also answering questions and learning new vocabulary.<br>• Semantic maps helped participants understand better the stories. With the information of the maps, students could retell the stories. |
| Realization of maps | • The majority of participants showed a slight improvement on the realization of their maps. They were more organized and complete.<br>• The maps looked more appealing and they were easy to read thanks to the pictures and symbols depicted on them. |

To continue with the analysis, the next paragraphs will focus on the interpretation and analysis of the post-test and the focus-group interview in order to find an answer to the third question of the present study: To what extent, the implemented strategies helped students comprehend a text? The post-test evaluated the reading skills and strategies students learned, while the focus-group interview was used to assess the activities, the books, the strategies and the implementation of the didactic sequence.

**6.2.7   Post-test.** The post- test was applied at the end of the didactic sequence. Students had 45 minutes to answer it. The test was applied in order to confirm students' improvement and how well they could finally perform in their reading skills. Below, the results of the post- test and a comparison between the pre- and post-tests are presented.
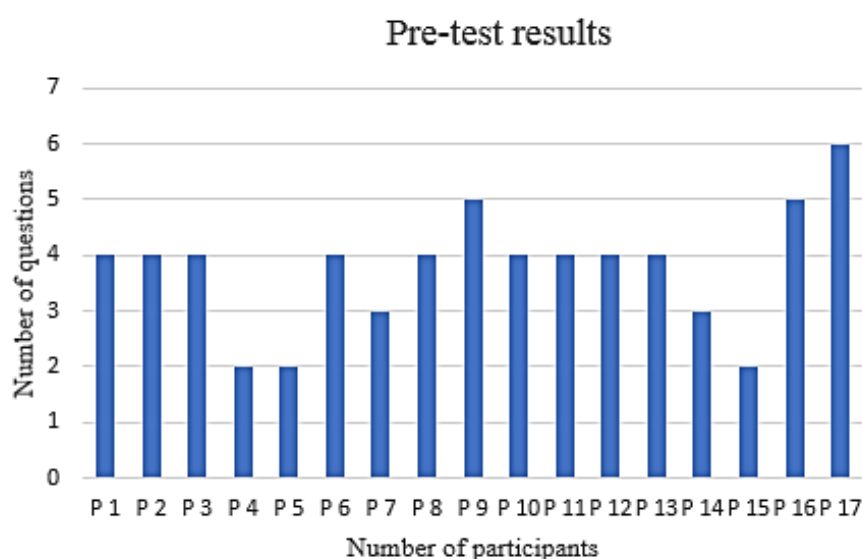


Figure 17. Post test results of participants

Figure 17, shows that one of the students got 7 and two participants got 6 questions out of 7 correct, these were the highest scores. The post-test revealed that 11 participants out of 17 achieved better and higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test. Participant 4 could not get

better results and his results in both tests were the lowest ones. The rest of participants obtained

the same scored they got in the pre-test, so they got half of the questions correct. Although they

did not show an improvement in the results of the pre-test, their score was in the middle point of

the highest score. Moreover, after the scores of the pre-test and post-test were obtained, the

scores were compared to see the differences between both tests. Figure 17 further illustrates the

comparison of scores.
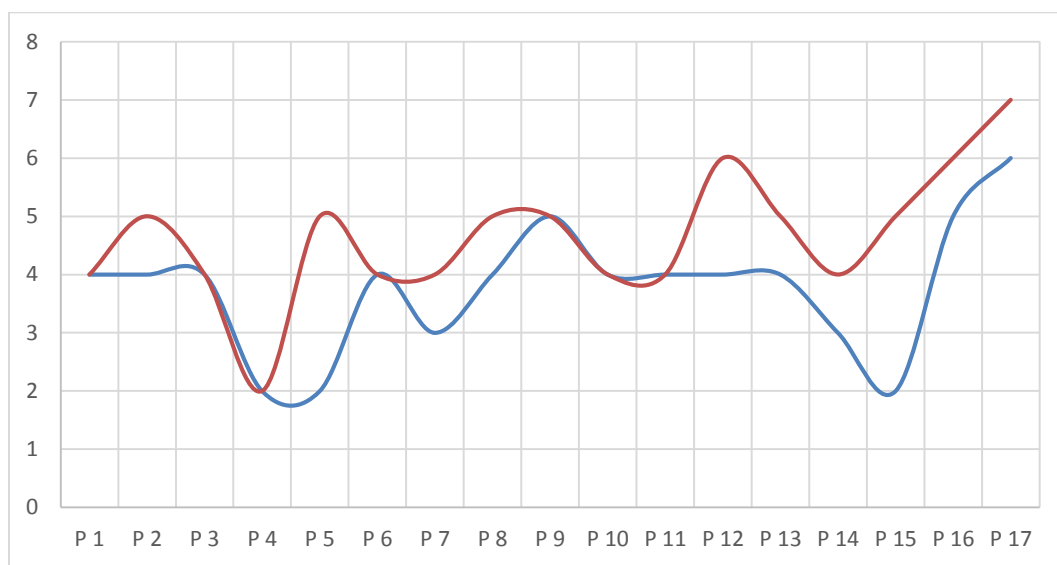


Figure 18. Comparison of results of the pre-and post-test.

Figure 18 shows a better performance of the participants in reading comprehension. The blue

line represents the illustration of the pre-test and the red line represents the illustration of the

post-test. Although not all participants reached the highest score in the post- test, they showed a

better performance on the test. The red line shows that 11 participants (P2, P5, P7, P8, P9, P12,

P13, P14, P15, P16 and P17) out of 17 obtained better scores in the post-test. The remaining

students (P1, P3, P6, P10, P11) obtained the same results in both tests. Although, not all the

students obtained better scores on the post-.test, the ones who achieved better results let see an improvement in their reading comprehension skills.

The following figure illustrates a comparison of each question on both tests.
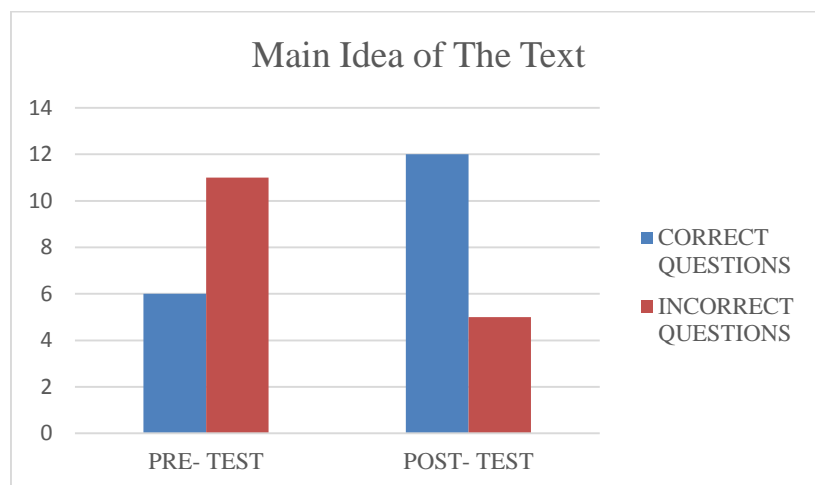


Figure 19. Comparison of scores in identifying the main idea in the pre-and post-test.

.As it can be observed above, the total of correct questions about identifying main ideas was higher in the post-test than in the pre-test. 12 participants could find the main idea in the post-test compared to the 6 students that could do it in the pre-test, and only 5 participants could not find the main idea of the text.

Figure 20 displays the comparison of scores in finding specific information from the tests.
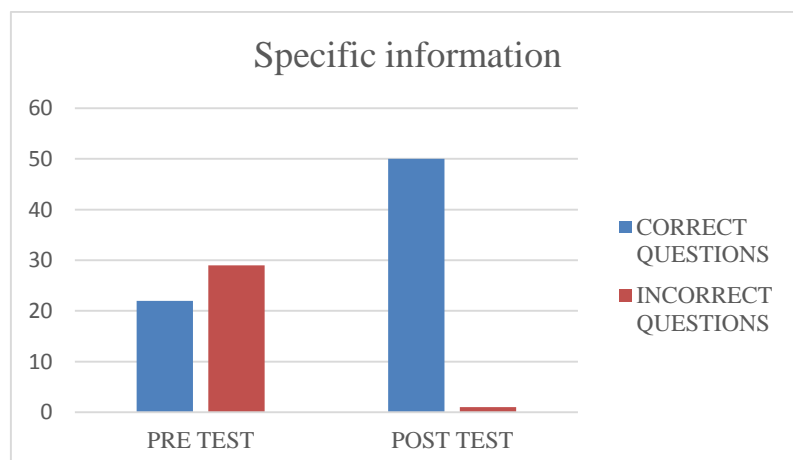
Figure 20. Comparison of scores in identifying specific information in both. tests.

Each test contained three questions for specific information. In total all the pre-tests collected, summed 51 questions as same as the post-tests collected. Thus, every participant had to answer three questions about specific information in the pre-and post-test. According to figure X, only 22 questions were correctly answered in the pre-test. On the contrary, 50 questions were answered properly and just 1 was incorrectly answered in the post-tests. This shows a better performance at identifying specific information in the post-tests. It means that 16 participants could satisfactorily scan and find specific information on their tests and just one student got 1 question incorrect out of the three they had on the test.

Finally, to conduct a further analysis of the pre-test and post-test, the mean and the standard deviation were taken out to see if the text really had positive improvements on students' performances in reading skills. Below, it is presented the mean and the standard deviation of both tests.
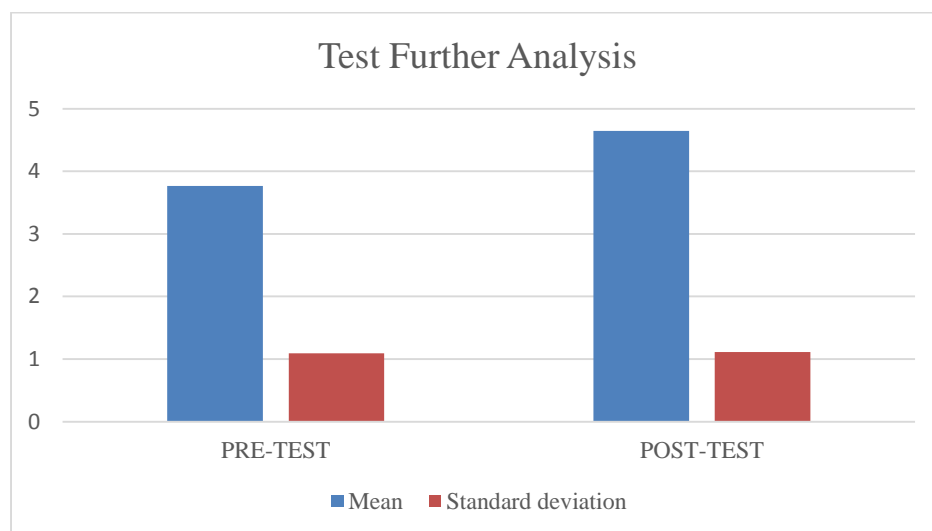


Figure 21. Mean and standard deviation representation of pre-and post-tests.

As it can be observed above, the mean of the pre-test was over 3,7 and the standard deviation was of 1,09 in average. On the other hand, the post-test had a mean of 4,6 in average and the standard deviation was 1,1 in average. The mean and the standard deviation suggest us an improvement in students' reading comprehension performance in the post-test compared the scores obtained in the pre-test.

To sum up, the analyzed data from the tests revealed that there was a suggested improvement on students' reading comprehension performance. Overall, students were able to get better scores in the pos-test. Following with the analysis, the next paragraphs present an interpretation and analysis of the focus-group interview, in which 9 participants were interviewed in order to know and assess opinions towards the activities, books, strategies implemented, and the didactic sequence.

**6.2.8   Focus-group interview.** The application of the focus- group interview (Appendix, 10) provided a bigger picture of the effects, opinions and perceptions of the participants towards the activities, the strategies, the content of the books and the didactic sequence in general. The categories that arose from the focus-group interview were: students' perception about reading, students' perception about the activities and the sessions, students' perception about the books, strategies importance and students' assessment of the implementation.

*Students' perceptions about reading*

Students provided their opinions and feelings towards reading after taking part of the implementation. Most of them said positive things about it:

To question 1, participants expressed that reading helped them to learn new words in both languages and improve some skills in English. They related reading as a way of learning.

Q1: ¿Qué opinas sobre la lectura?

*"Yo opino que es un método para aprender palabras tanto en inglés como en el español   nuevas" (FG-, P08).*

*"Me parece muy chévere porque a mí, me hace volar la imaginación" (FGI-P05.)*

*"Que es un buen método para aprender, y que es muy chévere y podemos aprender palabras nuevas" (FGI-P10).*

For question 4, participants showed a lot of interest in reading more in English during the academic year and they expressed their likes to read other types of texts. They noticed how important reading was for their process so that they wanted to continue reading more books during the English classes.

Q4: ¿Les gustaría seguir leyendo libros, en el año escolar?

*"Si, la lectura es muy importante me hubiese gustaría leer otros cuentos de diferentes géneros" (FGI-P02)*

*"Si, me gustaría seguir leyendo ahora como historias de misterio". (FGI- P05).*

*"Si, me gustaría seguir leyendo historias en los que pueda aprender temas de la actualidad" (FGI-P10).*

### Students' perceptions about the activities and the sessions

Most of the students expressed their feelings and opinions about the activities they liked the most during the implementation and the sessions in general. Their answers were positive, especially about the activities in which they could participate a lot and work in groups.

The majority of participants expressed they liked the sessions and the activities done during the didactic sequence. The activities they said they liked the most were the ones in which they

could give their point of view, activities in which they could use different intelligences and the

activities in which they practiced the strategies they were learning.

Q5: ¿Cuáles son sus opiniones sobre las sesiones y actividades que se realizaron durante la

implementación?

"Me *pareció super chévere porque a todos nos daba una hoja y decíamos nuestras opiniones*

*sobre bullying, y a aparecían imágenes y decíamos si era rico, si era pobre, si era terrorista"*

*(FGI- P05)*

*"la cosa que más me gusto fue cuando hicimos el cuadro grande y hicimos varias*

*actividades, como escribir, dibujar, hacer mapas, leer." (FGI- P07).*

*"A mí me gusto la de las estaciones y la de escanear porque me tocaba escanear y leer más".*

*(FGI- P13).*

"la *que más me gusto fue la de los mapas conceptuales, porque podíamos leer y construir*

*nuestros mapas con colores y hacer resúmenes" (FGI-P04).*

*"Todo me gusto, porque podíamos hacer cosas que nos gustaban y las actividades eran*

*interactivas y nos divertíamos leyendo" (FGI-P10.*

**Students' perceptions about the books**

In this case, the participants interviewed showed their likes and dislikes about the books that

were read during the didactic sequence. The majority of the boys expressed their interest in the

first book "The Butter Battle Book" and the girls expressed their interest in the second book

"Snow-white stories around the world". The ones that chose the first book "The Butter Battle

Book" said that they liked this book because of the machines and the gadgets that made part of

the story. The other participants expressed about the second book "Snow-white stories around

the world" that it was interesting because they could explore different things around the world in the four stories that the book presented.

Q3: ¿Cómo les parecieron los dos libros que se leyeron durante la implementación?

"*A mí personalmente, a mí me gustó mucho el de las princesas pues por ser alrededor del mundo a ver que les interesaba los cuentos, que les interesaba a las demás personas, en los diferentes sitios que les gustaba y no me gustó fue el de la mantequilla porque los dibujos pues eran …. una cosa… y los robots la verdad no me gustan.*" (FGI- 05).

"*Profe, a mí me gustaron los dos, el de la mantequilla me fascinó mucho porque las máquinas eran chistosas, diferentes, nunca las había visto y la otra también me gustó porque me acuerdo que habían matado a la reina por unos zapatos y por un vestido …. yo no sabía que alrededor del mundo también existían esas historias, yo solo pensé que en Estados Unidos y acá.*" (FGI- P08).

"*A mí me gustaron los dos porque…. aprendí más de la lectura en inglés y porque las dos aventuras… bueno la de la mantequilla estaba chévere y la de blanca nieves porque aprendí como se ve cada blanca nieves en cada país del mundo*" (FGI-P10).

"*Profe yo prefiero el de blanca nieves, porque estaba más larguito y más interesante y el de la mantequilla no me gustó*" (FGI-P07).

**Strategies importance and effectiveness**

Participants indicated which of the strategies were the most important and the most useful for them when they have to read something in English. Most of them reported that skimming, scanning and semantic maps were the most useful strategies and the ones they used the most

when reading something, because these strategies helped them to understand the texts and find the answers easily.

Q6: ¿Cuál estrategia aprendida creen que es la más útil a la hora de leer y la que más les gusto?

*"la que más uso y la que más me acuerdo es skimming y scanning para leer, porque me ayuda a encontrar las respuestas fácilmente"* (FGI- P05).

*"la de los mapas conceptuales profesora, lo uso para estudiar para aprenderme las cosas, para no sacar 2 en el parcial de inglés, para no sacar malas notas" (FGI-P07).*

*"los mapas conceptuales, porque me ayuda a resumir la información y entenderla mejor" (FGI-P02).*

*"lo de las palabras claves y las preguntas porqué así entiendo mejor" (FGI-P08).*

*"Yo las que más utilizo es la de skimming y scanning, digamos en el parcial en la parte de lectura lo que más me sirvió para responder las preguntas fue esa estrategia"* (FGI-P10).

**Students' assessment of the implementation**

Students admitted that they learned some things from the implementation, the readings and the strategies they used. They expressed how the strategies helped them to understand the texts better. They give positive comments about the strategies and the activities, and they said how much they would like to continue using books to read and learn English at school.

Q7: ¿Cómo les pareció la implementación en general (incluyendo sesiones, libros, actividades, las estrategias)?

*"Me pareció chévere e interesante porque uno puede seguir leyendo y lo que aprendió en el año lo puede seguir utilizando" (FGI-P05.*

*"A mí me gustó mucho porque me pareció muy buena la idea de leer libros en inglés porque aprendía mucho vocabulario, pero me hubiera gustado que hubiésemos leído más libros, y que no sean cortos si no más largos y los originales"* (FGI-P07).

*"Me pareció interesante porque podemos pensar más, imaginar, escribir, leer más rápido"* (FGI- P02).

*"A mí me gustaría seguir haciéndolo este año porque es muy chévere y los niños que usted no les alcanzó a dictar podrán conocer los libros y también tener ese conocimiento y me gustó mucho porque aprendí nuevas cosas, especialmente estrategias que me ayudarán en el futuro."* (FGI- P08).

*"A mí me pareció bastante divertido, pero me gustaría que siguiéramos trabajando así y que leamos por fuera del salón".* (FGI- P11).

*"A mí me gustó mucho y me gustaría que todos los años se pudiera hacer, que tuviéramos un libro de inglés y que se pudiera leer, como plan lector, pero en inglés"* (FGI- P10).

*"Me parecieron muy bonitas porque en ingles casi no se ve la lectura y pues me gustaría que se siguiera repitiendo y que leamos por fuera del salón de una forma más didáctico"* (FGI- P12).

*"A mí me pareció muy bien, todo porque aprendimos unas estrategias como la de skimming y scanning y esto nos ayuda para los exámenes y las actividades que hacemos de lectura, incluso en la clase de español".* (FGI- P04).

To conclude, it can be observed that the strategies implemented caused a good impact on students' perceptions towards reading and English, they noticed the importance of reading in English classes and the importance of using strategies to understand a text. They made positive

comments on having more reading in English classes and that the reading act must be more interactive and didactic.

Regarding the data analysis and the results presented previously, a summary of findings is presented below.

The analysis of the present study provides a big picture of the main difficulties fourth graders faced when reading a text and answering comprehension questions. The results of the present study are supported by Grabe (2009) who stated that comprehension is not a unitary event but rather a collection of skills and activities. Accordingly, the current study used four reading strategies to help students with their reading process, some activities to foster motivation, tools to support the reading process and some instruments to valid and verify the results obtained on each phase of the research study. All of this helped answer the main research question: How does the explicit teaching of four reading strategies benefit student´s reading comprehension process? After examining and interpreting the data taken from the instruments it can be concluded that the explicit teaching of reading strategies helped improve students´ reading skills and reading comprehension by using strategies that foster reading, using activities that motivate students in the reading process and using tools that help involve students connecting their world with the learning process . These results were in line with the findings obtained by Graham and Bellert (2004) who indicated that equipping learners with the explicit teaching of reading strategies can be an useful way to help learners overcoming difficulties in comprehending texts. This finding was drawn from students' performance on the texts, results from the checklist and rubric, observations forms, and the focus-group interview. More findings are presented in accordance with the research´s general and specific objectives.

From the general objective: "to determine how the explicit teaching of reading strategies benefit students´ reading comprehension process", can be concluded that:

- Training students to skim and scan information in a text, help them to easily find literal and inferential information in a text.

- The students that implemented the skimming and the scanning techniques were able to find satisfactorily general and specific information in the classroom activities and on the texts.

- The use of semantic maps helped students comprehend better the texts to some extent, due to the fact they used them to summarize the stories read and retell them with their own words.

- The brainstorming activities and the predictions activities students did to guess the meaning of unknown words helped students get familiarized with the content of the books and understand easier the texts in a great extent.

In general, it can be concluded that the use of reading strategies in the classroom benefit students' reading skills, because students become conscious and better readers that can comprehend different texts and be able to answer multiple-choice questions or open-ended questions. The next conclusions will address the three specific objectives posted at the beginning of the study. In relation to the first specific objective presented in the study: "to identify students' difficulties in reading comprehension activities", it was revealed from the pre-test and the observations done that:

- Finding specific and general information on the texts and understanding the meaning of new words were the main difficulties students faced during the reading process.

- When students had to answer comprehension questions, they felt very insecure because of their lack of vocabulary, and understanding of the text itself or the questions.

- Open-ended questions were a challenge for students, because they had to infer and write answers using their own words.

- Students did not use any reading strategy to answer comprehension questions before the implementation.

- Observations helped the teacher-researcher to document important events during the sessions and try to look for tools, activities, and ideas in order to improve reading comprehension.

Regarding the other objective presented: "To design a pedagogical intervention using four reading strategies proposed by Brown (2001) to improve students' reading comprehension", it was found from the observations, checklist, rubric, classroom documents and journal that:

- The implementation of reading strategies in the classroom helped students comprehend much better the texts, feel interested in reading and answer easily comprehension questions.

- From the first session to the last session, students became more confident and wanted to participate more, they feel interested on the activities, and this led participation took place in the classroom.

- Prediction and brainstorming activities helped students understand easier the texts when they read them, helped foster motivation and participation on students, helped students activate prior knowledge and connect it with the content of the books.

- The checklist and the Rubric were essential to evaluate students' reading exercises and the creation of semantic maps. They helped the teacher-researcher to have a picture of students' improvement on each lesson.

- The journal helped in a great extent reflect upon the activities done, the tools used, the way strategies were implemented, and the teacher practices during all the implementation stage.

With respect to the last objective of the present study: "To stablish the extent to which the implemented reading strategies help students comprehend a text", it was found from the post-test and the focus-group interview that:

- In the post-test, students showed that they could satisfactorily scan and find specific information on texts. Although, just 12 participants could skim without any problem on the pos-test, they showed better results on the post-test than the scores obtained on the pre-test.

- Students showed not only an improvement on the post- test, but also on the reading activities that were implemented during the didactic sequence. Participants demonstrated a slight progress from the first session to the last session.

- It was revealed from the focus-group interview that students noticed how important was to apply reading strategies when reading a text, and the importance of reading to improve their English language skills. Students' perceptions changed about reading as well. They felt so motivated that they expressed how much they would like to continue reading for their English classes. This finding was in line with the results obtained by Jimenez & Izquierdo (2014) who found in their research that skimming, scanning and predictions guide learners in the path of autonomy, because thanks to them learners feel motivated.

Considering the results mentioned above, it can be concluded that the use of reading strategies in the classroom helped to a great extent improve students reading comprehension. The use of some strategies and techniques during the reading makes the learning and the comprehension process easier. For the teacher- researcher , the implementation of reading strategies in the classroom presented some benefits for the learning process: 1) When students put into practice reading strategies they become autonomous readers and learners, 2) motivation and students

desire for reading increases, 3) When students comprehend better the texts they read they get better results on their test and classroom activities, and 4) The use of strategies helped students take part of the class by participating more.

The use of narrative texts or picture books in the classroom helps students have a wider view of the world. It helps students to think critically and connect their previous experiences and background knowledge with the content of the books. Something that could be observed when students were in the reading time was how secure and interested students were when the content of the books were discussed. They felt free to speak, gave their point of view and shared with the class even personal experiences and made reflections upon the events. Also, Porras (2010) helps to support this finding by mentioning in her study how the use of stories and an interactive methodology made the learning process significant and fun for students.

From all the findings mentioned above, we can see that reading comprehension involves a recursive process of predicting, testing, questioning, inferring, among others, and the main challenge in the classrooms is that teachers instruct learners in the use of reading strategies and skills in order to strengthen their language reading process. This assertion is supported by Roit (2005) who concluded that teaching students to use a repertoire of comprehension strategies and skills help them to be lifelong readers. This allows reader to be able to adjust, modify or change strategies or skills until they can fully comprehend a text.

## 7. Conclusions

Reading comprehension strategies play an important role in the reading process of a learner. They help readers make sense of what they are reading and improve their reading comprehension performance and skills. In view of this, the present study gave opportunities to improve and

develop reading comprehension skills through the use of four reading strategies (skimming, scanning, semantic maps and guess the meaning) proposed by Brown (2004)**.** Based on the findings that have been presented on the previous chapter, it can be concluded that reading strategies have a great impact on the students reading processes. This study highlighted the idea that comprehension processes are influenced by a variety of strategies that can be instructed in the classroom. At the same time, these strategies need to work together to help learners construct meaning and make sense of the texts.

Another conclusion drawn from the findings and the analysis is that reading materials and activities should be based on students´ interests in order to motivate and let learners take part of the reading process in a more autonomous way.

The findings of this research suggest the importance of incorporating reading strategies into daily English classes at elementary schools, in order to provide learners with better learning opportunities. This calls for transformations in English teaching elementary schools where the focus should be on guiding students to become lifelong readers by equipping them with enough tools and strategies they can use during the act of reading.

This study also confirms that young learners can, if exposed to it from an early age, become independent readers who use reading strategies to comprehend and make sense of every text they read. In addition, learners become critical-thinkers when they have texts that can recall their personal experiences and their background knowledge.

Concerning teaching practices, the results of this study emphasize the importance of the planning and the reflection phases in which the teacher-researcher takes an important part. The continuous analysis and observation of the lessons let teachers have a growth-mindset. Thanks to

the repeating reflection done during the lessons the teacher challenges herself to make changes to her lessons and activities in order to strengthen her teaching practices and learners can get a benefit from them.

## 8. Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the study have some pedagogical implications. The following implications are made for the teachers.

- Reading should be part of all the English classes. Reading needs to be incorporated to the curriculum and be taught to students, due to the fact, students do not know how to read in a foreign language.

- Teachers must teach and instruct students about the use of reading strategies. Reading is evaluated on tests but students are not being instructed in the use of reading strategies. Students need to learn how to use reading strategies so they can prepare themselves for the act of reading and go beyond the texts.

- The act of reading should integrate all the processes (bottom-up and top-down) and stages (pre-while and post-reading) so that students develop their reading skills.

## 9. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, some suggestions to do further research are:

- Students should be given training during the complete academic year about techniques and strategies about reading, so they will continue improving their difficulties on reading.

- Reading should be done every week, so that students can be more interested in reading, they gain more vocabulary and they feel curious about reading.

- A variety of reading activities should be done during English classes to develop students´ capacity of analysis, inference, critical thinking and solving problems.

- Observations should be done in every session of the English classes, due to the fact, when you observe and analyze what is happening in the classroom, the teacher can reflect on the activities, her teaching practices, and look for changes, solutions and improvements for next sessions.

- Further research should be carried out over a longer period of time in order to confirm the results obtained in this study and to investigate further advantages and disadvantages of applying reading comprehension strategies and techniques in the English classroom.

- For future research should be important to incorporate other strategies different from the ones used in the present study, to make comparisons and see how well learners perform and improve their reading comprehension skills. Besides, the act of reading should be practiced in different environments where the students can relax and love reading unconsciously.

- Considering the results presented in this study, the following questions can be considered as further points to continue working on the construction of reading practices to enhance reading comprehension in the English classroom: How do young learners construct meaning using reading strategies and collaborative work? and How do picture books help young learners become critical-thinkers and autonomous learners?.

## 10. Limitations

During the implementation of the present study, some limitations were encounter when teaching and learning reading comprehension strategies:

- One of the main limitations in the present study was the time constraints. Time was very important to develop every session, but sometimes 45 minutes were not enough to fulfill the requirement of some sessions. As the teacher had to complete other requirements for the English classes. She could only use two hours of five to work on the research project. So, this restriction of time was a limitation to develop more activities and practice more the skills during the didactic sequence.

- Another limitation of the study was the reading activities students needed to develop in almost every class, because of the lack of resources the teacher had at the school and she did not have the permission to get extra copies for the activities, she had to do the activities in different ways. For instance, students realized the majority of the activities on their notebooks or in sheet of papers which were collected. As students did not have a sheet of paper with the reading exercise to do, it took more time finishing the tasks because students had to rewrite questions or looked at the board to see what the question were to find the answers.

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## Appendix

Appendix A. Carta de consentimiento

**Estimado Padre de familia:**

Durante el segundo semestre de este año, se llevará a cabo un proyecto de investigación en la institución educativa **Nuestra Señora del Rosario** el cual lleva por título: "**Using four Reading Strategies to Improve Reading comprehension in Young EFL Students**". El proyecto busca beneficiar a los estudiantes y a las prácticas de clase, centrándose en la mejora de la comprensión lectora usando estrategias que ayuden a los estudiantes a inferir, analizar, resumir, entre otros. Del mismo modo, este estudio no perjudicará a ninguno de los participantes de ningún modo si no se obtienen los resultados esperados.

En caso de dar la autorización para que el estudiante pueda participar en el proyecto, básicamente les solicitará firmar este formato al final del documento y acompañar a sus hijos durante este proceso. Las actividades relacionadas al estudio se realizarán durante dos horas de inglés de la semana. Los estudiantes deberán contestar un cuestionario, realizar las actividades relacionadas a comprensión lectora, responder preguntas sobre los libros que se utilizarán, se grabarán algunas clases para hacer una óptima observación del mejoramiento y avance del proceso de comprensión y de la actitud de los estudiantes durante cada actividad. Se tomarán registros como fotos de las actividades hechas y algunos videos. Todos los documentos que se trabajen durante esta investigación serán devueltos al investigador para un análisis de datos.

Los hallazgos de la investigación se recopilarán en un informe final que se presentará al Departamento de la Maestría de la Universidad. De igual manera, se socializarán dichos resultados en la presentación del proyecto de grado.

La participación de los estudiantes de vital importancia para este proyecto. Las actividades que se harán en las actividades de lectura harán parte de sus obligaciones para esta clase **inglés** A todos los participantes se les garantizará:

El uso de nombres ficticios para mantener su identidad en el anonimato.

1. Estricta confidencialidad con la información recolectada.

2. El acceso y la verificación de la información recolectada.

3. El uso de la información recolectada será usada únicamente con propósitos académicos

Agradecemos su gentil atención y su autorización para colaborar en el desarrollo de este proyecto. En caso afirmativo, favor completar la información que se encuentra a continuación.

Nombre del padre de familia

_____

Firma del padre de familia                                                C.C

_____                    _____

Fecha: _____                    Teléfono: _____

Correo electrónico: _____

Appendix B. Lesson plan Format

<div align="center">Daily Lesson Plan</div>

Teacher:                                                                    Lesson Date:

Lesson title:

| **Assessment Limits/Standards:**  During this lesson Ss work on while-reading activities.   *(What are the skills being taught? Which standards are being specifically addressed in this lesson?)* | **Agenda:** *(What is the snapshot of my class flow?)* |
|---|---|
| **Lesson Objective:** *(What will my students KNOW by the end of the lesson?  What will they DO to learn it?* | |

| TIME | INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE | FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT Note: A variety of formative assessments should be used at key points throughout the lesson. |
|---|---|---|
| 10 min | **Get started/Drill/Do Now:** *(What meaningful activity will students complete as soon as they enter the classroom?* | |
| 5 min | **Engage/Motivation:** (*How will student interest be sparked? Is there prior knowledge that should be tapped?  Is there vocabulary that must be cleared?  Is there brainstorming that student need to complete before the lesson begins?)* | |
| 10min | **Whole Group Instruction:** *(Focus lessons [explicit teaching/modeling, strategy demonstration, activate prior knowledge], shared reading, shared writing, discussion, writing process.)* | |
| | **Group Practice/Small Group Instruction:** (teacher-facilitated group) | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Doesn´t apply for this session | |
| 10 min | **Independent Practice**: *(individual practice, discussion, writing process.)* | |
| 15 min | **Evaluate Understanding/Assessment:** *(How will I know if students have achieved today's objective?)* | |
| | **Closing Activities/Summary:** *(How will I tie up loose ends, reinforce/revisit the objective and connect the lesson to the unit?)* | |

| |
|---|
| **Resources/Instructional Materials Needed:** *(What do I need in order to teach the lesson?)* Board, and pieces of cardboard. |
| **Notes:** |

Appendix C. Observation form

| Class: (level, age, # of students,etc):           Session #        DATE: | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **OVERALL Aims of lesson:** | | | | |
| **Stage** | **Activity/ procedure** | **Strategi es** | **Particip ant** | **Comments** |
| Introduction | . | . | | |
| Practice time | | | . | |
| Producing time | | | | |

Appendix D. Pre-test

Name: _____ Grade: _____

<div align="center">READING COMPREHENSION TEST</div>

## New books this month

**The Long Night**

This is David Reilly's first book. David became a writer after teaching English for several years.

Maha is a nurse in northern Australia, where she works in a small hospital. One day a baby is so ill that Maha has to drive all night to get her to the nearest big city. They have a lot of problems getting there and ...
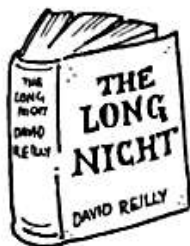
**Hard Work**

This exciting story is Joanna Jones's twentieth.

*Hard Work* is about Sombat, who works with his father, a carpenter, in Thailand. They work long, hard hours making tables and chairs, but they do not have any money. Then one day a man dressed all in black buys the most beautiful table in the shop ...

**Hospital or Cinema?**

Marcie Jacome, who studies English in London, wrote this story earlier this year.

Tina is a young Brazilian woman whose dream is to become a doctor. She goes to London to study English and medicine but one day she meets a man who asks her to go to the USA with him to become a film star ... What will Tina do?

Read the following text and answer the questions from 1- 7. Mark the best option.

1.  What is the text about?
 A.  It is about what some people is reading in this month.
 B.  It is about short biographies of three different people.
 C.  It is a short summary of new books.

2.  Which book is about someone who works with doctors?
 A.  The Long Night
 B.  Hard Work
 C.  Hospital or Cinema?

3.  Which book is about someone who is very poor?
 A.  The Long Night
 B.  Hard Work
 C.  Hospital or Cinema?

4. Which book is about a man and his son?
 A. The Long Night
 B. Hard Work
 C. Hospital or Cinema?


5. What can you infer from the text?
 A. The three books are about mystery.
 B. The three books are presenting three different stories and from different authors.
 C. The three books present how difficult was to the main characters of each story to achieve their goals and to make their dreams come true.

6. What is the intention of the text?
 A. To inform about three new books for reading.
 B. To narrate three different stories.
 C. To describe three different books and their authors.

7. Which book would you like to read?
 A.  The Long Night
 B. Hard Work
 C. Hospital or Cinema?


Why?_____.


Adapted from A KET Sample Paper.

Appendix E. Post-test

## READING COMPREHENSION TEST

**Read the text and questions below. Mark A, B, C or D.**

### My Job at a Summer Camp, by Charlie Rose

Every year I work at a summer camp for kids and I really enjoy seeing the children do things they never thought they could do. Nearly all the kids know how to swim and play table-tennis before they come, but things like rock climbing are new experiences for most. Some of them are very nervous, but after a bit of encouragement, they agree to try and they all get to the top in the end, which makes them feel great.

The kids stay several weeks and some do miss home. You might expect it to be the really young ones who feel like that the most but it's actually the ten- to thirteen-year-olds. We don't let them use their mobile phones all the time. First we tell them they can phone home after lunch. Then when they ask again, usually after dinner, we say it's a bit too late to phone and suggest doing it the next day. Most children are fine in a couple of days and at the end of their stay, it's amazing how many come and thanks us because they have had a great time.

It's not just the children who get lonely. We get parents who are on the phone the whole time, asking how their child is getting on, which is quite unnecessary. Often their son or daughter will be busy, playing games or doing something else, so we have to tell parents to ring back another time.

Some kids arrive dressed in smart, designer, new clothes and they sometimes argue when we tell them to change into something they won't mind getting dirty, but before long they realise what we mean.

1.What is the main idea of the first paragraph?

A Summer camps are great for kids.

B Nearly all the kids know how to swim and play table-tennis.

C Children do things they never though they could do such as rock climbing.

D Children go to a summer camp every year.

2.When can the children phone home?

A after dinner

B after lunch and if they ask again after dinner

C after breakfast

D all day


3.Which children miss their parents the most?

A the eight- years-old

B the six- years- old

C the ten- to thirteen- years-old

D the ten- years- old


4 When does the writer work in the summer camp?

A every day

B every month

C on weekends

D every year


5.What is the intention of the author?

A to narrate his experience in a summer camp.

B to explain what is his job about

C to inform people about the summer camp

D to describe the activities at the summer camp

6. What can you infer from the text?

A The text describes how children make friends at a summer camp

B The text suggests how parents should choose a summer camp for children

C The text explains what it is like for children at a summer camp

D The text advices children how to behave at a summer camp


7.Would you like to go a summer camp?

A yes

B no


Why? _____

_____.


Adapted from Cambridge English Entry Level Certificate in ESOL International (Entry 3)

Appendix F. While Reading Checklist

| Categories | Yes, he/she could do it ,3 | No, he/she couldn't do it , 1 | More data needed,2 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Read (silently, chorally, with partners) to confirm predictions and questions. | | | |
| Highlights important information of the text or unknown vocabulary, while she/she reads. | | | |
| Identifies the main idea of some parts of the text by using skimming. | | | |
| Identifies specific information of the text by using scanning | | | |
| Identifies the author´s purpose. (Did the author write the text to inform, entertain, or persuade?). | | | |
| Looks for important similarities and differences in characters, events, or concepts | | | |

Appendix G. Semantic Maps Rubric.

| Rubric Categories | Great | Good | Average | Needs More | Not Ready |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Highlights** | Highlights key words and all the relevant information in the text. | Highlights key words and some relevant information in the text. | Highlights some key words and little information in the text. | Highlights just keywords that are not relevant. | does not highlight any keyword, nor relevant information |
| **outline and steps** | Follows every step learned when creating maps, and uses them to create an outline. | Follows some steps learned when creating maps, and uses them to create an outline. | Follows a few steps and makes an attempt on doing an outline. | Follows some of the steps for the creation of maps but does not create any outline. | Does not pay much attention to the steps and does not create any outline. |
| **key words** | Uses a lot of key words, relevant phrases or sentences for the creation of maps. | Uses some key words, relevant phrases or sentences for the creation of maps. | Uses a few key words, relevant phrases or sentences for the creation of maps. | Writes many information, than short sentences and key words on the map. | Does not use any key words or relevant information from the text. |

| main categories | Organizes the map by all the categories learned, besides adds up extra ones. | Organizes the map by all the categories learned. | Organizes the map by some of the categories learned. | Organizes the map by a few categories and seems incomplete. | the map lacks of categories and it is very incomplete. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| organizat ion | the map is well-organized and the story can be summarized by reading the map. | The map is organized and the story can be summarized. | The map is organized but it's difficult to summarize the story for the lack of information. | the map is not well organized and there is some information missing. | the information was not organized in the right categories, besides there is a o lot of information missing. |
| Creation | Uses a lot of symbols, images, pictures, colors and arrows for the creation of the map. | Uses symbols, images, pictures, colors, or arrows for the creation of the map. | Uses some symbols, images, colors, or arrows for the creation of the map. | Uses few symbols, images, colors, or arrows for the creation of the maps. | Uses any symbols, colors, images or arrows for the creation of the maps. |

Appendix H. Journal example of a log



Log #7                                Date: 24-09-2018

Methodology:
Goal: Ss will be able to create a semantic map. Ss will retell the story by using the map.

Today, I continued working on the planner from the previous session. Due to the fact I couldn't finish it last session. Today, Ss worked on pairs in order to share their maps analyzed them and then create a new one but much better.
This Activity helped Ss to work collaboratively and help each other. This also helped them to look for more information due to the fact that both Ss had more ideas and think of more than one option. as an answer.

Appendix I. Reading Comprehension Outline

Name: _____

## MY STORY OUTLINE

**Characters**

**Setting**

**Beginning**

**Problem**

**Solution and**

Appendix J. Focus-group interview

Se inicia la entrevista, con una corta introducción y saludo, explicando a los participantes el motivo de la entrevista, y el propósito. Se contextualiza a los estudiantes para que puedan contestar cada una de las preguntas.

1.  ¿Qué opinas sobre la lectura?

2.  . ¿Cuándo lees que es lo que sueles hacer?

3.  ¿Cómo les parecieron estos dos libros que se leyeron?

4.  ¿Les gustaría seguir leyendo libros, en el año escolar?

5.  ¿Cuáles son sus opiniones sobre las sesiones y actividades que se realizaron durante la implementación?

6.  Q6: ¿Cuál estrategia aprendida creen que es la más útil a la hora de leer y la que más les gusto?

7.  Q7: ¿Cómo les pareció la implementación en general (incluyendo sesiones, libros, actividades, las estrategias)?