

**IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH SKIMMING, SCANNING
AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS**

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FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS

ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS

BUCARAMANGA

2018

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AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS**

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Requirement for the degree of Magister en Didáctica de la Lengua

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to God who gave me the opportunity to study and advance in my career. To my parents and my sisters who encouraged me to continue working on this dream and never give up.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to God because he gave me the time, the economic opportunities and the intellectual capacity to successfully start and finish these postgraduate studies. In addition, I would like to show my gratitude to all those people who helped me in different ways achieve this important goal. They are my parents who gave me all their support and help. My teachers who shared their knowledge and experience and were always willing to clear up my doubts. My classmates for their unconditional cooperation and my tutor, Luz Mary Quintero, who guided me to find the correct way of working with my students and get the best results of my classes and pedagogical intervention. I also want to thank my tenth graders who were always willing to participate in this project. Despite there were some problems that affected the classes sometimes, they were patient and responded actively to the different activities carried out in class. Finally, I want to thank Gonzalo Jiménez Navas School, the place where I work, because it allowed me to conduct this project and help students to improve their level of English and show them that there are other ways to take advantage of English classes.

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RESUMEN

TÍTULO: MEJORAR LA COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA A TRAVÉS DE SKIMMING, SCANNING Y ORGANIZADORES GRÁFICOS.*

AUTOR: LILIANA ROCÍO FLÓREZ CASTRO**

PALABRAS CLAVE: SKIMMING, SCANNING, ORGANIZADORES GRÁFICOS, COMPRENSIÓN DE LECTURA.

DESCRIPCIÓN: Se debe admitir que el ejercicio de la lectura es esencial para aprender y afianzar el conocimiento del inglés. El inglés se hace necesario para acceder a diferentes tipos de información que solo se encuentra disponible en este idioma. Ofrece muchos beneficios que permiten al lector ampliar su conocimiento, ya sea en cuanto al vocabulario, formas gramaticales, entre otras. Sin embargo, hace falta enseñar las estrategias adecuadas que transformen el ejercicio de la lectura en algo motivador y divertido en donde se beneficien no solo los estudiantes sino también los docentes. Con estas razones en mente, el objetivo de esta intervención pedagógica fue mejorar la comprensión de lectura en inglés a través de las estrategias de lectura de skimming (lectura de vistazo), scanning (lectura de detalle) y organizadores gráficos. La intervención se realizó con 38 estudiantes de grado décimo en un colegio público de Floridablanca, Santander. Los estudiantes sugirieron los temas de lectura, lo cual fue de gran importancia para despertar su motivación y anclarlos al proceso. Entre los aciertos de esta intervención pedagógica se encuentran el mejoramiento de la comprensión lectora, así como la adquisición de nuevas palabras en inglés que enriquecen el vocabulario de los estudiantes. Fue un trabajo útil y dinámico ya que los estudiantes evidenciaron su aprendizaje de una manera práctica y con lecturas que tenían un sentido para ellos.

* Trabajo de grado

**Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director: Luz Mary Quintero, Magíster en Lingüística Aplicada a la Enseñanza del Inglés.

ABSTRACT

TITLE: IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH SKIMMING, SCANNING AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS *

AUTHOR: LILIANA ROCÍO FLÓREZ CASTRO**

KEYWORDS: SKIMMING, SCANNING, GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS, READING COMPREHENSION.

DESCRIPTION: I recognized that the exercise of reading is essential to learn and consolidate the English language knowledge. English is necessary to access the different kinds of information that is only available in English. It offers a lot of benefits that allow readers to broaden their knowledge, whether vocabulary, grammar, among others. However, it is necessary to teach the accurate strategies that transform the exercise of reading in something engaging and amusing not only for students but also for teachers. With these reasons in mind, the objective of this pedagogical intervention was to improve the reading comprehension in English through the strategies of skimming, scanning and graphic organizers. 38 tenth graders from a public school located in Floridablanca, Santander participated in the intervention. The students suggested the readings, which was very important to awaken their motivation and anchor them to the process. The improvement of reading comprehension and the acquisition of new words in English are among the successes of this pedagogical intervention. It was a useful and dynamic exercise since students evidenced their learning in a practical way, since they interacted with the text and used themes of readings chosen by them.

* Master thesis

**Facultad de Ciencias Humanas. Escuela de Idiomas. Director: Luz Mary Quintero, M.A in Applied Linguistics in English Teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The central argument of this action research comes from the observation and daily interaction inside the classroom. This pedagogical intervention involved a group of 38 tenth graders between the ages of 14 and 17 years old in a public school located in Floridablanca, Santander. This action research study seeks to understand how students deal with texts in English and how the teacher can help them to improve their reading comprehension through three important reading techniques: skimming, scanning and graphic organizers. The action research is made up of important broad topical blocks which bring to light the problematic situation and how it can be solved taking into account three reading strategies that help students to make sense of texts, the accurate resources and the appropriate environment of learning and teaching. In this way, students participated in a project that helped them to develop a successful comprehension of the text and consequently make meaning.

The first part of this document presents the problematic situation that has been observed and analyzed through daily interaction. Here, the problematic situation of the students in regards to reading in English is exposed. The reading strategies are unknown to them because they have never been directly instructed in the use of strategies during the reading activities. According to Afflerbach, Pearson and Paris, "reading strategies are deliberate, goal-directed attempts to control and modify the reader's efforts to decode text, understand words, and construct meanings of text".¹ Thus, reading strategies help learners master processes that are going to be useful to facilitate reading comprehension. In addition, reading strategies encourage the development of critical thinking that allow learners to draw clear objectives in the reading exercise and focus on the most important of the text.

The second part of the action research brings to light the reasons why the problem deserves to be investigated. It suggests the importance of facing the problem in the sociocultural reality and discusses how this problem has been addressed previously.

On the other hand, the objectives of the study are presented in order to understand how the

¹ AFFLERBACH, Peter., PEARSON, David & SCOTT, Paris. Clarifying Differences Between Reading Skills and Reading Strategies. In: *The Reading Teacher*. 2008. [Online] (61) 5. p. 368

investigation was developed and what theories support this action research, which are essential to demonstrate how the problem has been treated in order to improve reading skills by making use of skimming, scanning and graphic organizers. Finally, the methodology is absolutely necessary within the qualitative interpretative paradigm. Therefore, action research methodology is adopted because it is the most useful tool to give solutions to problems inside the classroom. The next pages will be dedicated to solving this important question: how does the use of skimming, scanning and graphic organizers techniques enhance the reading skill of students at a public school?

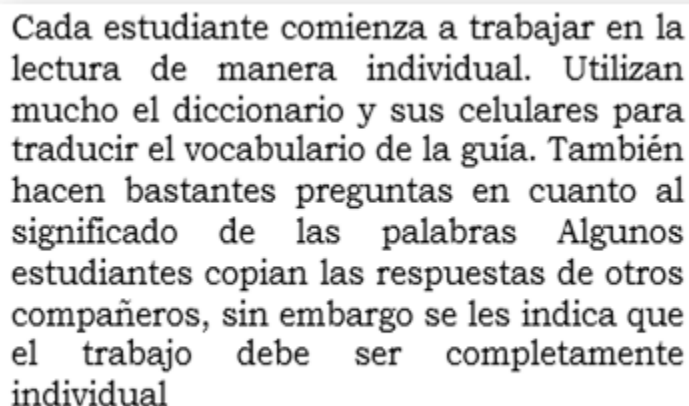
It is essential for educators or tutors to know what academic problems students have to find the best way of helping them solve those difficult situations that can be present in the classroom. The majority of learners who study in public schools have to cope with some external circumstances that impede the development of their learning in different ways. Some of these circumstances are the number of students in the classroom, the lack of technological resources and the little investment that is done in the school buildings and materials, among others. These situations, to a certain extent, affect the performance of learners in class and do not achieve the learning level that their teachers expect from them. The following chapter describes English reading comprehension as a didactic problem, why it is necessary to solve this problem and what theoretical foundations exist for addressing the problem in the classroom with the aim of improving the way students read English texts.

1. THE STUDY

1.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This action research seeks to inquire more in depth into the way that students face the readings in English with different levels of difficulty. The way they read is an obstacle to further progress because the students have problems to get what the texts communicate. Consequently, some of the activities that are proposed to work in class become difficult for the students and impede reading development. In other words, the reading exercise inside the classroom becomes a translation but not an interpretation exercise. Following is a sample of a class observation made on May 19, 2017 to illustrate this idea. During this class session, participants worked on a diagnostic reading test to know the way they assume the reading exercise.

Figure 1 Sample of an observation



Cada estudiante comienza a trabajar en la lectura de manera individual. Utilizan mucho el diccionario y sus celulares para traducir el vocabulario de la guía. También hacen bastantes preguntas en cuanto al significado de las palabras. Algunos estudiantes copian las respuestas de otros compañeros, sin embargo se les indica que el trabajo debe ser completamente individual.

English translation

Each student starts to work on the reading individually. They use the dictionary and their cellphones too much to translate the vocabulary from the worksheet. They also ask many questions with respect to the meaning of the words. Some students copy the answers from other classmates, however they are instructed to answer the test by their own.

The diagnostic reading test is a valuable instrument that allows researchers to know the general level of reading that students have and the essential features that they manifest when assuming the reading exercise. This diagnostic reading test allowed the researcher and the participants to recognize not only their abilities when reading in English but also their weaknesses. It was the starting point that allowed establishing the reading strategies that could be useful to improve students' reading comprehension.

On this matter, Arding, Brunfaut and Alderson affirm that "SFL readers are typically reading in a language that they have not mastered, and therefore L2 reading problems at least as much language -related as reading - related. Therefore diagnosing SFL reading will involve diagnosing language problems as well as strictly reading problems".² Students took a diagnostic reading test that was useful to observe and then diagnose what problems or difficulties they have when facing a text in a language that is not their native language, in this case, English. The following charts illustrates the diagnostic reading test results.

Figure 2 Diagnostic reading test results.

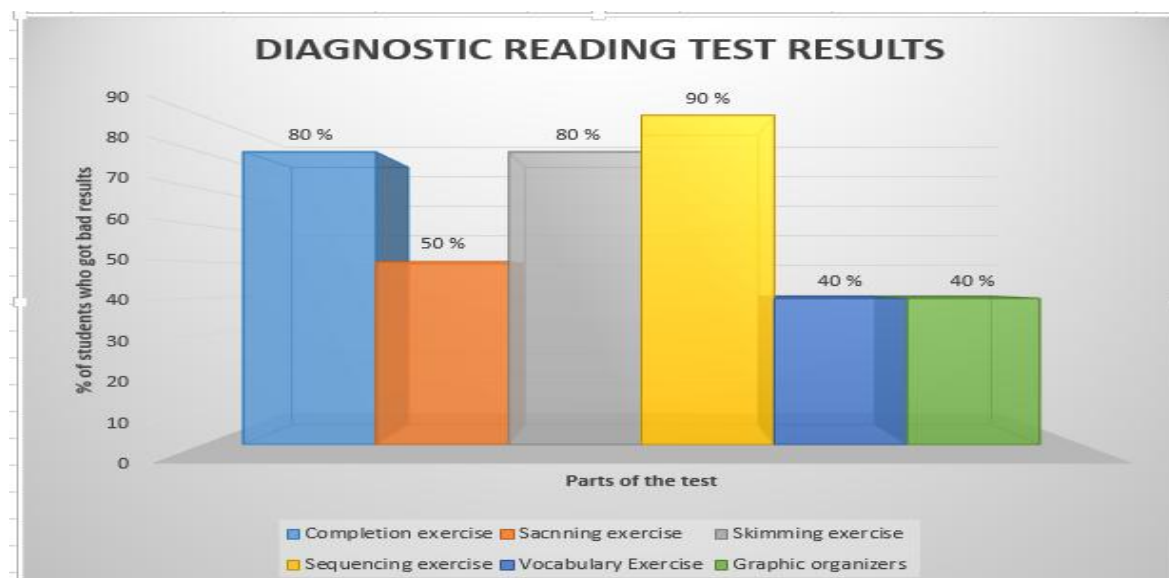


Figure 3

DIAGNOSTIC READING TEST RESULTS		% of students who got bad results
Number of participants	10	
Completion exercise	8	80
Scanning exercise	5	50
Skimming exercise	8	80
Sequencing exercise	9	90
Vocabulary Exercise	4	40
Graphic organizers	4	40
NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	10	

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Figure 2 and figure 3 explain the results that students got after applying the diagnostic reading test. 10 students took the exam and the results varied according to the exercise proposed. In the first exercise, participants had to complete a description with some given words. These words were *camp*, *cruise*, *hike* and *swim*. 80% of students did not get good results in this exercise. Many of them did not know the meaning of the words and they could not relate the text and the words given. I could notice that *hike* was a difficult word for them because none of them knew the meaning. The second exercise was related to scanning. The students had to read a text called “Travel Adventure: Alaska to Argentina” and then answer two questions. 5 of the 10 participants could not find the answer in the text. Figure 11 shows a sample of this exercise and the answers given by a student.

At this point, and after seeing these results, it is important to address the significance that the practice of English reading has for the development of basic competences in a foreign language and thus contribute to a successful acquisition of the language.

English as a foreign language involves four main skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing) that are necessary to strengthen to create a structural view of the language. It means, to know the basics and continue working to improve the language learning. Mastering these skills allow students to accomplish a successful learning process of the language. Reading and comprehension represent some problems to many students around the world. These problems are related to the students’ capacity to read the words themselves and sometimes they do not find the relationship that exists between the meaning of the text and the sentences. For this reason, it is complicated to understand what the text wants to

communicate. It is widely acknowledged that the school plays an important role in developing strategies that allow student to be successful in reading.

However, there are some factors that prevent them from taking advantage of the text and consequently its comprehension is very poor. According to Van Chung ³, an investigator from Vietnam, these comprehension problems are related to the limited proficiency in English that students have when dealing with texts. In consequence, this problematic situation increases the risk for reading failure. This author says that this situation can lead the student to experience a constant struggle with the text with the objective to understand the content. Unfortunately, the results are not always the best. On the other hand, some students tend to separate the whole content of the text into isolated pieces, like small paragraphs or sentences. Thus, students cannot organize and interpret the text effectively. Other study that took place in Albania relates the problems in reading comprehension with other conditions. Shehu⁴, the author of this action research, relates the problems on reading comprehension to three important aspects. One of these aspects is vocabulary since new words are seen by students as a big difficulty which is very hard to overcome. The lack of enough and accurate vocabulary impedes to decode the message and consequently the comprehension of the text. On the other hand, the author affirms that working memory is absolutely necessary to achieving success in reading comprehension. This involves remembering what students read. But for some learners this is almost impossible since they do not have the right tools to access and retain the information. Finally, the absence of extensive reading makes students read little or nothing. Therefore, they do not have many opportunities to develop reading strategies.

On the Colombian scene, the problems with English reading are perceptible in the majority of schools and universities. According to the document **English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors**⁵, 43 percent of students who were assessed in

³ VAN, Chung Ho. A study of Reading Comprehension Problems in English Encountered by First Year Students of Faculty of Vietnamese Studies [online] p. 2

⁴ SHEHU, Irena. Reading Comprehension Problems Encountered by Foreign Language Students, case study: Albania, Croatia. In: Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies.2015 [online] 4 (1), p. 92

⁵BRITISH COUNCIL, English in Colombia: An examination of policy, perceptions and influencing factors.2015 [online] , p. 33

their reading skills answered that they do not read frequently enough. In other words, students do not regularly read in the foreign language and some schools do not give enough attention to develop the reading skill in class and consequently this ability is not strengthened. Some studies have been carried out in Colombia, to investigate what learning strategies contribute to the development of reading skills. One important study was developed with sixth -grade students at Venecia School located in Tunjuelito, Bogotá. Calderón, Carvajal and Guerrero⁶, the authors of this action research, introduced the skimming technique in order to familiarize students with it and thus build a different atmosphere to face the complex process of reading in an accurate way. After applying the skimming technique, the researchers found that students were highly motivated because they found the readings easy to understand. They concluded that the skimming technique brought many advantages in comprehending a text. For example the acquisition of new vocabulary and the progress in learning process that students showed

Regarding graphic organizers, some studies have been carried out to show how this reading skill can be effective to improve English reading in the classroom. Echeverry and McNulty⁷ investigated how graphic organizers, among other skills, work to increase English reading comprehension. Their investigation was implemented in a public school in Envigado (Department of Antioquia), Colombia. After using some graphic organizers, the authors concluded that the majority of students could clarify their ideas about the topic, helped students to learn more and understand better. They could draw important and relevant ideas about the proposed readings which was very useful to clarify doubts and develop their own thinking.

In Norte de Santander, Colombia, some people have investigated about reading and have found interesting information about improving English reading skills through skimming and scanning. This is the case of an action- research performed in a public school in Pamplona. The researchers Sindy Díaz and Juan Carlos Laguado⁸ found interesting things after applying

⁶ CALDERÓN, Sandra., CARVAJAL, Ligia & GUERRERO, Ana. How to Improve Sixth Graders Reading Comprehension through the Skimming Technique. 2007 [online], p. 31

⁷ ECHEVERRI, Luz & MCNULTY, María. Reading Strategies to Develop Higher Thinking Skills for Reading Comprehension. In: Profile. 2010 [Online] 12 (1), p. 116

⁸ DÍAZ Sindy. & LAGUADO, Juan. Improving Reading Skills Through Skimming and Scanning Techniques at a

these reading techniques. They discovered that scanning and skimming helped to change some students' attitudes and feelings towards reading and their comprehension increased because of the tasks, which were designed to achieve the objectives proposed. Their reading practice was also transformed because they approach the readings in a different way, with other expectations. The researchers also realized that students' participation increased and they did not make many mistakes. The researchers concluded that skimming and scanning were very useful in several aspects in students' learning process.

Regarding the English courses that I conduct, there are some difficulties that were observed during the classes. It is important to mention that these students have difficulties when they read texts and try to answer some comprehension questions or accomplish other kind of reading exercises. A few of them use dictionaries but they try to translate word by word. They do not get the main idea of the text because they find a lot of unknown vocabulary. Therefore, their comprehension is very poor. There is also absence of extensive reading since they do not remember what they just read. The majority of the learners prefer to copy the exercises from other students and make little effort to achieve the proposed objective by themselves. But why is it important to develop strategies that help students to improve their reading abilities and comprehension? Learning in classrooms is mainly obtained through language. Teachers do many activities in the classroom to guide students and achieve the proposed objectives.

There are different ways to engage students in academic tasks. For example through reading, writing, exploring the internet, listening to teacher discourse, students presentations and so on. All of these ways to get information and explore the form students learn are very important in the classroom interaction. But reading is the core of this document, so it is necessary to explain why students need to improve some reading strategies (skimming, scanning and graphic organizers) in order to address the issue of reading comprehension. In terms of Gallagher⁹, there are important reasons that must motivate the reading exercise among the learners. For example, reading needs to be rewarding or gives satisfaction to people. Some specific benefits that result from reading and highlight the school life beyond

Public School: Action research. In: Opening Writing Doors Journal. 2013 [online] 10 (1), p. 142.

⁹ GALLAGHER, K. Reading Reasons. Motivational mini- lessons for middle and high school. 2003 [online] p. 24.

the classroom are the acquisition of vocabulary, the improvement of spelling and memory and the enhancement of the writing and speaking skills. However, the majority of the students that study in public schools, do not find reading rewarding because they feel some kind of frustration since they seldom understand what they read and tend to give up on the reading activity. This is negative in view of the fact that effective reading is essential for success in acquiring a second language. In Colombia, in accordance with Rios and Valcárcel¹⁰, students in public high schools tend to have low levels of English which makes reading comprehension challenging. And reading is considered a product instead of a process that must be focused on the readers and their peculiar interaction with the reading comprehension. With this in mind and taking into account the Colombian situation in public schools, in terms of reading and reading comprehension, it is considered appropriate to examine, how the initial approach to the reading process is and how students become aware of the reading process.

RESEARCH QUESTION

After observing the problems that students have when reading and understanding a text in English, the following question arises: *How is tenth graders' reading comprehension improved through skimming, scanning and graphic organizers?*

The following are the research objectives:

1.2 OBJECTIVES

1.2.1 General objective

At the end of the pedagogical intervention, tenth graders will be able to read texts in English comprehensively by using the skimming, scanning and graphic organizers techniques.

1.2.2 Specific objectives

- To diagnose what reading problems students have and try to solve them through skimming, scanning and graphic organizers techniques.

¹⁰RÍOS, Sonia & VALCÁRCEL, Ana. Reading: A Meaningful Way to Promote Learning English in High School. 2005 [online].p. 61

- To design a pedagogical intervention that allows tenth graders from a public school, to practice three specific reading techniques to achieve the global understanding of a text.
- To implement the pedagogical intervention based on skimming, scanning and graphic organizers techniques to foster tenth graders reading comprehension.
- To evaluate the achieved goals by students during the pedagogical intervention and the effectiveness of the proposed reading techniques to improve the reading comprehension in English.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

After examining the influence that reading comprehension has on learners and how useful it is to make progress in their academic career, it is important to dedicate some lines to define some significant terms which are the basis for this didactic intervention. Thus, it is appropriate for this study to mention what the literature says about the importance of reading and reading comprehension and how skimming, scanning and graphic organizers become accurate reading techniques to improve learners' comprehension.

2.1 READING

In terms of Mikulecky¹¹ reading is a conscious and unconscious thinking process. People go about their lives reading newspapers, advertisements, books, emails, social networks and all kinds of texts without using any particular strategy or method to enhance their reading ability. It is a basic activity that human beings use in their daily lives when necessary. Some people can read at a much higher level of comprehension, acquiring new vocabulary and new ways to understand texts thoroughly. According to Grellet¹², reading means extracting the information that we need from a text as efficiently as possible. It is a constant process of guessing where the reader uses many different strategies to understand what he or she reads before, during and after reading. The reader makes hypothesis, tries to establish connections, makes predictions and re-reads the text to find more details that are not revealed until the reader applies some strategies to become independent readers. Grellet explains what successful readers do to monitor their comprehension and thus acquire new information. In this way, successful readers are able to reconstruct the text and reinterpret concepts and ideas. Miller¹³ also expresses his opinion about what a good reader is. He says that English language learners (ELL) readers are able to adopt several strategies that help them to interpret many kind of texts for a variety of purposes. These strategies are presented while the individual reads.

¹¹ MIKULECKY, Beatrice. Teaching Reading in a Second Language. 2008. [online].

¹² GRELLET, Françoise. Developing Reading Skills. Cambridge University Press. 1999 [online] P. 3

¹³ MILLER, Leah. Teaching English to English Language Learners. Insights from linguistics. 2010. [online] p. 64

In words of Kurby, Britt and Magliano¹⁴ readers often use information that comes from different sources as an aid for interpreting a text or a story. This comprehension is created using the knowledge that the reader has not only from the words and syllables that he or she can decode (bottom-up), but also from the background or contextual information (top-down) that the reader has, which allows him or her to create expectations of the text and build meaning. In this sense, the ability to understand a text and process the information lies not only with recognition skills but with interpretation skills because the reader creates his or her own world and interprets it according to his or her knowledge and experiences.

According to Grabe¹⁵, reading becomes a communicative function that has to be developed step by step, taking into consideration important elements like reading skills. However, it is necessary to say that reading skills are not a guarantee of success for anyone, but these are very useful at the moment of approaching a text since it is going to be easier to get what the text communicates. This is particularly important when learning foreign languages.

At schools, learners need to be successful at reading in L2. For this reason, implementing reading strategies that contribute to achieve this goal, has become necessary. But what is a strategy? Grabe¹⁶ states that “strategies are commonly defined more simply as processes that are consciously controlled by readers to solve reading problems”. This means that strategies are taught and learners are able to perceive how good they are at reading and how this affects or helps their reading comprehension. In L2, the majority of readers do not understand very well what they are reading. Consequently, they need some strategies that help them to be conscious of their own progress. These students have to struggle with knowledge, unfamiliar vocabulary, syntax, reading tasks among other complex processes that evidently cannot control. The urgency to teach some reading skills was born from these necessities.

¹⁴ KURBY, Cristopher, BRITT, Anne & MAGLIANO, Joseph. The role of top-down and bottom-up processes in between-text integration. *Reading Psychology*. 2005 [online]. No.26.P. 336

¹⁵ GRABE, William. *Reading in a Second Language. Moving from theory to practice*. Cambridge University Press. 2010 [online]p. 4

¹⁶ Ibid., p 221

Grabe and Stoller¹⁷ assume important positions in respect to reading. According to them, reading is an interactive process. It is related to the way that learners recognize words and keep them active in their memories. At the same time, readers are analyzing the structure of sentences to give them the most logical meaning. In addition, students are building and monitoring comprehension. They also consider that reading is a comprehending process because understanding a text is part of the purpose of reading and a learning process because students acquire new information through reading. Taking into account this interpretation of the reading process, it can be said that the use of reading strategies help to develop all these mechanisms named above. Skimming, scanning and graphic organizers can benefit the interaction of the learners with the texts because they are going to develop punctual strategies, where comprehension will be present.

2.2 READING COMPREHENSION

Reading comprehension involves a range of actions that must be assembled to get meaning. To obtain this, Blachowicz and Ogle¹⁸ say that it is important to reflect upon the material that readers have in their hands. According to them, the comprehension process starts activating readers' own information and experiences that are linked to the text. Then, they connect words, paragraphs, ideas and images with a view to predict what the author wants to transmit. When there is reading comprehension, readers revise the ideas and take in new information. This exercise allows comprehension to be continued. If learners acquire the ability to read comprehensively through the appropriate techniques, they will be able to build connections between the text and the context, to understand and identify the essence of the reading, to determine the relations that exist among the ideas and finally analyze and summarize all the information or knowledge that the texts offer them.

In terms of Mendieta *et al* "When reading a text, readers have to interpret what is written as well as establish what the author wants to transmit. In so doing, they combine their

¹⁷ GRABE, William STOLLER, Fredericka. Teaching and researching reading. 2002 [online] p. 156.

¹⁸ BLACHOWICZ, Camille & OGLE, Donna. Reading Comprehension: Strategies for independent learners. Second edition. New York: The Guilford Press, 2008. [Online] p.12.

background knowledge about the topic of the text with what has been actually written”¹⁹. Thus, reading comprehension is understood like the relationship that comes up from the interaction between the reader and the author. In this interaction, readers go deeper to find meaning and connect what they know with their interests. The text itself makes sense, but the reader has to make a construction of the text and gives his or her appreciation of it.

According to Calderón, Carvajal and Guerrero, “reading comprehensively, first, implies the capture of the writer’s purposes. It also implies that readers identify basic information, are able to predict, to infer, to argue and to recognize writers’ points of view”²⁰. Thus, the exercise of comprehensive reading becomes a text recognition that activates the ability to understand and relate the content with the concepts that are relevant for readers. It is a process of determining the significance of the text and it implies not only the learners’ capacity to understand but also their willingness to implement reading strategies that facilitate the appropriation of knowledge. When learners see the necessity to understand what the text communicates, their reading process becomes an active process that is marked by the interaction with the text.

According to Soden *et al* “reading comprehension is clearly a learned skill, subject to differences in instruction and in the environment”²¹. In this sense, reading comprehension becomes an ability that should be guided inside the classroom to detect what difficulties students have when reading a text. As long as the teacher witnesses these difficulties, it will be easier to apply the appropriate reading strategies that allow students to understand what they read and retain the information. Here lies the importance to design a coherent reading sequence that facilitates reading comprehension and gives students the necessary tools to understand a text. This is giving them, little by little, the elements that help learners acquire

¹⁹ MENDIETA, Jenny. *et al*. Fostering reading comprehension and self-directed learning in a collaborative strategic reading (CSR) setting. En: Íkala, revista de lenguaje y cultura. Medellín. Enero-Abril, 2015, vol.20. p.4 ISSN 0123-3432.

²⁰ CALDERÓN, Sandra, CARVAJAL, Ligia & GUERRERO, Ana. How to improve sixth graders’ reading comprehension through the skimming technique. En: Profile:Issues in Teaching Professional Development. Bogotá. Marzo-Julio, 2007, vol.8. p.28 ISSN 1657-0790.

²¹ SODEN, Brooke, *et al*. Longitudinal Stability in reading comprehension is largely heritable from grades 1 to 6. 2015 [online]. In:Plos One. (10) 1, e0113807.

comprehension. Thus, it is necessary to support the process with pre-reading, during-reading and post-reading activities that increase the comprehension and bring knowledge to mind. These three stages are crucial to get the meaning of the text and achieve the proposed objectives step by step. This is a way to offer the students a set of tools that transform their reading comprehension and ensure their reading success.

2.2.1 Pre-reading. Before undertaking an important activity like reading, learners need to prepare their minds to enhance their comprehension and get the total advantage of the text. Haque says that “there is a great importance of pre-reading phase since it prepares the learners to read. Pre-reading phase helps to activate learner’s prior knowledge about the topic of the text”²². In this sense, pre-reading activities become a meaningful stage in the reading process where the individuals make use of the knowledge of the world they have acquired before developing their reading and writing skills. Thus, the teacher who guides the reading process, provides students with the necessary conditions that are decisive to begin the interaction with the text. When a student learns English, the process of exploring the prior knowledge becomes essential since his or her linguistic competence is not fully developed. Otherwise, the analysis and comprehension of the text becomes a simple exercise of translation that does not give the student the possibility to expand his or her extra linguistic knowledge. Consequently, the students may have difficulties to learn and comprehend the text.

2.2.2 While-reading. In this stage, the learners apply strategies that help them to understand the text while they are in the process of reading. Gulchekhra argues that while - reading stages “include activities that a pupil engages in while reading the text and the purpose of these activities would be to enable pupils to achieve the lesson aims by handling the text in different ways”²³. These while reading activities are vital to experience the text and help

²² HAQUE, Mesbahul. Do Pre-Reading Activities Help Learners Comprehend a Text Better? 2010 [online].Brac University. P. 10

<http://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/bitstream/handle/10361/763/Md%20Mesbahul%20Huq.PDF?sequence=4>

²³ GULCHEKHRA, Khamraeva. Benefits of Implementation of Pre-, While and Post Reading Activities in Language Learning. . Bukhara State University. 2016. [online] p. 45

learners maintain a very close contact with the text while they process all the information that it offers them. This stage allows students to focus on some aspects of the reading that are crucial to understand what the text communicates.

2.2.3 Post-reading. This stage gives learners the necessary elements to reflect, summarize and question the information they have just read. This is the final moment when students prove they understood the text and demonstrate how useful the reading strategies were. According to Wahjudi, in the post-reading stage “meaningful learning is carried out because students relate new information with their own life and experiences”²⁴. Thus, this stage concludes the reading process and they are ready to account for the information they found in the text. They are also able to give their point of view with regard to the text and reinforce the ideas they have about it. It is supposed that students focus more deeply on the text at this stage because learners have overcome a process. Students feel more confident when they reach this stage because their comprehension level has increased.

In conclusion, the reading stages are very important to increase interest in reading and create expectations about the information that texts hide.

2.3 STRATEGIES CONSIDERED TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM

Reading comprehensively is an important ability that demands some characteristics from learners. According to Grabe²⁵, reading needs to be rapid to maintain the flow of information and be able to make connections and inferences from the text. Reading is purposeful because there is always a purpose for reading and determine what is important when reading since students need to use the information for a specific task. Reading is interactive and uses learners’ background to create clearer ideas of the text. Reading is flexible because the reader uses some strategies that make his or her reading process easier and more efficient and

²⁴ WAHJUDI, Arwijati. Interactive post-reading activities that work. Universidad Estatal de Malang. 2010[online]. 38 (1) p. 87

²⁵ GRABE, William. Current developments in second language reading research. In: Tesol Quarterly. 1991 [online] 25 (3). P. 378

effective. Reading develops gradually because it is a progressive process that requires a lot of effort and time. Nobody is an expert reader overnight. Learners need to know some strategies and put them in practice, to get everything from the text. Hence, this pedagogical intervention adopted three reading strategies (skimming, scanning and graphic organizers) to increase tenth graders' reading comprehension in English. It is about training strategic readers who think about what they read, develop specific skills and reading strategies and learn to apply these strategies and skills as a way to get meaning from different text types.²⁶

As part of our education based on the traditional model, the reading strategies that have been used in the classroom have still not been developed in detail. As teachers, we need to think about why learners find difficulties when reading and find the correct strategies that help them achieve a good level of reading. These strategies should be introduced gradually and systematically, so ~~that~~ they become part of the learners' abilities. According to Rodríguez Hernández²⁷ "through reading strategies students gain a better understanding of the texts in English they interact with, and this is possible thanks to the mental processes developed by each individual". Thus, skimming, scanning and graphic organizers are used in this study as the strategies that can help students achieve professional and academic success. The reading process has to be clear and challenging for learners to produce the best reading outcomes. With this in mind, it is crucial to see how skimming, scanning and graphic organizers have been used as efficient tools to facilitate English reading comprehension in high school students for the purpose of supporting this study and evaluating their utility in the classroom.

²⁶ ROIT, Marsha. Effective Teaching Strategies for Improving Reading Comprehension in K-3 students. [online] p. 1

²⁷ RODRIGUEZ, H. Jessica & RODRIGUEZ, Guadalupe. Reading comprehension strategies: A case study in a bilingual high school. [online]. En:Revista Matices en lenguas extranjeras. 2009 [online].(3) p. 5

2.3.1 Skimming. Efficient and effective readers learn to use many styles of reading for a big variety of purposes. As teachers, it is necessary to understand that reading comprehension is not one type of reading but several according to learners' reasons for improving reading. When skimming, the reader goes through the text or material quickly with the purpose of getting the general meaning of the text rather than all the details. That is why the reader can get a first impression of the text, know how it is organized and get a general idea of the intention of the writer. Some authors like Tamsi, Zuhri and Kurniasih²⁸ argue that there are some steps that can be applied for putting the skimming skill in practice. These steps involve reading the title which is crucial to have the first contact with the text. Then, it is necessary to read the introduction of the first paragraph and then read the first sentence of each remaining paragraph to get a more accurate picture of the reading material. Dipping into the text and looking for keywords, is also fundamental since the intention is to obtain an impression of the whole text. Skimming is also very useful when the reader needs to make the decision to identify the main idea of the text. Reading in the classroom has some particular features that make it different from the rest of reading activities that students have outside the classroom. For example, time is limited. The teacher has to develop other language skills and this situation does not allow teachers to dedicate enough time to promote reading. On the other hand, students do not have the initiative to read English texts outside the classroom because it is difficult to understand and these texts are outside their personal likes and interests. For this reason, the educator has to look for strategies that help them to involve in the experience of reading in a new language and take the advantage of the text. For these reasons, skimming becomes a good strategy to lead students to a better reading comprehension and show effective results.

2.3.2 How does skimming work? The practice of reading always supposes the interrelation between the text and the reader's expectations. Sometimes, these expectations are so detailed that the reader sets aside other factors that are necessary to get the whole substance of the text and that can be perceived through a closer reading. In this regard,

²⁸ TAMSI, Kusuma.,ZUHRI, Fauriz & KURNIASIH, Esti. The Implementation of Skimming and Scanning Strategies in Teaching Reading Narrative Text to the Tenth Grade Students SMAN 21 Surubaya. 2013 [online] 1(2) p. 3

Masson²⁹ says that a person is not always concerned with reading and does not pay attention to every detail of what is written. A person reads because he or she needs to find specific information and ignores other information that is irrelevant at the moment. In these cases, the reader moves through the text faster than when reading for full comprehension. Some interesting steps that are proposed can be very useful when it comes to implementing the skimming strategy. These steps are related not only to the first impression that the title can give us about the text but also to the searching for clue words. The goal is to get a first impact of the whole text. These steps are appropriate for students, because encourage them to anticipate the matter of the text and infer its content.

Dhieb³⁰ proposes three steps that can be useful when skimming a text. According to her, the first step allows students to focus on the general macrostructure of the article, the content schemata and discourse features. This is convenient to activate the previous knowledge that students have and what ideas come from the first contact with the text. The second step consists in determining the general idea of the text by reading selectively the whole text. The third step is related to the reading speed and the skimming process that students adopt to understand the reading. These steps have to be guided by the teacher in order to show students how skimming strategy works and get the general overview of the text.

2.3.3 Scanning. Scanning, just like skimming are reading techniques that allow readers to read rapidly and efficient. According to Grellet, "when scanning, we only try to locate specific information and often we do not even follow the linearity of the passage to do so. We simply let our eyes wander over the text until we find what we are looking for, whether it be a name, a date, or a less specific piece of information"³¹. In this sense, it can be said that this reading skill allows readers to locate particular facts that they need. For this reason, it is necessary to establish a purpose when reading to avoid non-essential information.

²⁹MASSON Michael. Cognitive Processes in Skimming Stories. University of Colorado. 1979 [online] P.80

³⁰ DHIEB-HENIA, Nebila. Applying Metacognitive Strategies to Skimming Research Articles in an ESP Context. Tunisia: English Teaching Forum.2006 [online]. P. 4

³¹GRELLET, Francoise. Developing Reading Skills. Cambridge University Press. 1999 [online]. p. 56

According to Cross cited by Tamsi³², scanning involves searching with a purpose. The author says that the reader does not read without a specific aim. He has a purpose and the scanning skill is perfect to help the learner to realize what he is looking for in the text. In other words, scanning is the process to read a text quickly to find detailed or exact information. This information is for example, related to relevant times on a timetable, dates, etc. It is also important to anticipate how the answer will appear in the text, in order to look for the specific information without wandering through the text.

2.3.4 How does scanning work? When scanning a text, it is important to follow some steps that can help readers find the information they are looking for. In this respect, the reader has to know exactly what he or she wants to find in the text. It is also necessary to look for only one keyword at a time. Otherwise, the reader might be confused. When finding the keywords, readers must read the surrounding material carefully and see if those lines give the information that readers need to know to solve a comprehension problem. One of the first steps consists in knowing what the reader is looking for. It is not about looking for drifting words or terms but to make sense what the learner reads. Scanning allows learners to look for the keywords that are important to understand the text, find these words and finally read the surrounding ideas attentively.

When scanning, the reader has to be very smart to find what the author's organizers are, which are necessary to find order in the text. According to Arundel cited by Tamsi³³, there are a big variety of steps or actions that can be indispensable to put scanning strategy in practice. Some of them are the following:

- The learner has to keep in mind what he is looking for. This step saves time because the learner knows what the purpose of the scanning exercise is and does not allow himself to lose the objective.
- Anticipating the information and thinking about how the information can be presented in the text, are suggested by the authors named above. For example numbers, proper nouns and specific name or quotation.

³²TAMSI, Op. Cit., p 3

³³ Ibid, P. 4

Scanning is not accelerated reading. On the contrary, it is a close observation that is related to the continuity of searching for desired information. The skimming and scanning techniques are going to make a significant contribution in the way students read since they are necessary to locate important and remarkable information in less than normal time. Their experience with the text is going to be more rewarding. On the contrary, the students who do not use a specific technique to extract the essence of the text, are going to have problems when understanding main ideas and other kind of information.

2.3.5 Graphic organizers. With respect to graphic organizers it must be said that it is a very useful skill for classifying information of a passage under a schema. According to Keene and Zimmerman ³⁴the students

must be encouraged to make connections with the text they read to increase the effectiveness of reading. Graphic organizers can play a vital role establishing the connections. The text will be very clear to students when a graphic organizer is incorporated depicting the theme or content of a text they read. Moreover, graphic organizers using diagrams illustrate concepts and relationships between concepts discussed in a text.

That is to say that graphic organizers help students or learners to approach the content of the text and make the necessary connections to create meaning since this valuable tool takes into account the visual way some students learn. They also summarize the most relevant information and allow learners to associate important aspects of a concept. In other words a graphic organizer is a visual representation of understanding. One of the advantages of using graphic organizers is that learners can organize the ideas according to the way they conceive them. Using graphic organizers gives students the opportunity to connect ideas and create concepts.

In terms of Garzón “graphic organizers are tools which are used as the strategy for students to organize their ideas and provide evidence of reading comprehension. They are visual aids that provide an excellent way for the students to summarize concepts, organize the language

³⁴ KEENE, Ellin and ZIMMERMAN, Susan. Mosaic of thought: Teaching comprehension in a reader’s workshop, cited by SAM, P and RAJAN, P. Using graphic organizers to improve reading comprehension skills for the middle school ESL students. *In: English Language Teaching* 2013 [online] N° (2) 6 P. 156

and then, apply the concepts coherently”³⁵. Graphic organizers allow learners to enhance their learning and identify the areas of the text that contain the information they need. They are also useful to make connections between the text and the learners’ ideas and force students to make decisions about the text. When learners include the use of graphic organizers in their reading comprehension exercise, they acquire a special ability to organize and summarize the information to make it clearer.

In conclusion, learners are going to encounter a lot of reading problems that are going to affect their understanding of the text. However, it is decisive to train and prepare students in the use of reading strategies with the aim of helping them overcome the constraints that can carry the reading exercise.

³⁵ GARZÓN, Edwin. Improving reading skills in beginner learners by means of graphic organizers an the use of English-leveled readers. Universidad de La sabana 2017 [online] P. 21

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This pedagogical intervention is designed under the methodology of qualitative study. According to Maxwell³⁶, in a qualitative study “the activities of collecting and analyzing data, developing and modifying theory, elaborating or refocusing the research questions, and identifying and dealing with validity threats, are usually going on more or less simultaneously, each influencing all of the others. In addition, the researcher may need to reconsider or modify any design decision during the study in response to new developments or to changes in some other aspect of the design” (p.214). Qualitative study is mainly exploratory that allow researchers to go deeper into the problematic situation and help to establish accurate solutions that make teaching more meaningful.

The qualitative research project that I developed in my own English class as a research teacher, is based on action research. Anne Burns argues that “action research addresses questions of real practical and theoretical interest to many educational practitioners. Furthermore, teachers are involved in a genuine research process of data collection, analysis and interpretation, which contrasts with intuitive reflection”³⁷. In this way, action research becomes an interesting tool to engage teachers and students in critically reflective activities that are related to students learning and teachers practice. The research process involves repeated cycles of planning, observing and reflecting, among others, that individuals and groups adopt as a way to acquire the necessary changes that are going to improve their knowledge and social interaction.

As an English teacher, I can identify some problematic situations that condition students’ learning in the English class. One of this problematic situations arises when students are faced with the challenge of reading. The majority of times, the exercise of reading is difficult for them, since they do not have the accurate tools to face the text. Consequently, it is imperative to evaluate the way students are learning how to read and assume the exercise of

³⁶ MAXWELL, Joseph. Designing a qualitative study. In: BICKMAN, Leonard and ROG, Debra. *et al.* Handbook of Applied Social Research Methods. SAGE, 2009,[online] p. 214

³⁷ BURNS, Anne. Collaborative action research for English language teachers. 1 ed. Cambridge University Press. 1999. p.24-25

reading with greater discipline and dynamism. As Jones, Palincsar and Carr³⁸ argue, the teacher plays an important role in reading instruction. On one hand, they are in charge of the content of a lesson and on the other hand they have to teach students the different processes that are required for analysis, reasoning and solving problems. In this respect, it is necessary that teachers make students become aware of the different methods that exist to explore a text and understand what it wants to communicate. It is about applying the accurate reading techniques that allow students to achieve the complete comprehension of the text.

According to McNiff and Whitehead³⁹ action research is a way of researching your own teaching. It is a way to observe our own practice and check how satisfying it is. If teachers find that their practice needs more attention, it will be necessary to take action and improve the way of teaching and produce evidence that supports the changes made during the teaching performance.

Burns⁴⁰ also states that action research is the combination of two modes of activity - action and research. For her, the action is a continuous social process in particular social contexts as schools that involves improvement and change. Research is related to the systematic observation and changes that are necessary to make to fill the space that exists between the ideal ways of doing things and the real ways of doing things. In other words, action research involves the way of teaching that increases knowledge, improves practice and therefore students' learning. Action research gives teachers the opportunity to evaluate their own practice and solve common problems that affect teaching in the classrooms. It is fundamental to understand what happens in the classroom in a deeper way.

But what does action research involve? In terms of Burns⁴¹, there are some common characteristics that can be considered as part of action research. The first characteristic is that action research is contextual, small-scale and localized. In other words, it is responsible for identifying and investigating problems that are present in specific situations inside the

³⁸ JONES, Beau., PALINCSAR, Anne & CARR, Eyleen. Strategic Teaching and Learning. Cited by BAKER, Scott & GERSTEN, Russell, 2002. [online] Procedure facilitators and cognitive strategies: Tools for unraveling the mysteries of comprehension and the writing process and for providing meaningful access to the general curriculum. P.65

³⁹ McNIFF, Jean & WHITEHEAD, Jack. Action Research: principles and practice. 2002 [online] P. 15

⁴⁰ BURNS, Anne. The Cambridge guide to research in language teaching and learning. [online] (2009) p. 290

⁴¹ Ibid.p. 30

classroom. The second characteristic that this author mentions is related to how evaluative and reflective action research is. It forces the teacher researcher to think about the process of teaching and learning steadily and contemplates the self-examination that must arrive at the improvement in practice, which is going to be beneficial for both teachers and learners.

The third characteristic takes into account its participatory nature with the aim of consolidating the collaborative investigation through teams of colleagues, researchers and practitioners. The fourth characteristic of action research focuses on the importance of collecting data to know what students can do and in what they fail. This last feature provides all the information necessary to make the changes that will benefit the students and teachers' teaching methods.

Kemmis and Taggart (cited by Burns and Kurtoglu)⁴² propose a cycle of different and interactive steps that allow teachers to put the action research in practice. These stages are planning, action, observation and reflection. The planning stage refers to the ideas about what to investigate in the classroom and develop other ideas related to teaching strategies and activities. At this stage, the researcher needs to have a detailed plan of the action that is going to take place in the classroom, thanks to the previous observation that has been made through the daily interaction with the students. In this phase, it is necessary to revise the teaching strategies and think about how to improve them. The planning stage prepares the ground for observing difficult learning situations and monitoring the changes that are essential to be implemented in the classroom.

The action stage refers to the implementation of the plan and the experimentation with new activities. This stage is linked significantly with the reality that teachers and students experiment in the classroom because sometimes things do not go as teachers and participants expect. So, it is necessary to be willing to make some changes that help students to achieve the proposed goals. Teachers have to be aware of the deviations that can occur during the action stage and take advantage of those changes that can help students and researchers to solve the learning problem that is present in the classroom.

The observation stage gives the teacher the opportunity to collect some information or data

⁴² BURNS, Anne AND KURTOGLU, Nur. Implementing action research in the modern language classroom. Scotland's National Center for Languages. 2014 [online]P. 23

that is going to evidence the implementation of the plans. At this stage, it is essential the detailed observation that includes constant monitoring of the actions that take place in the classroom. Thus, the effect of the pedagogical intervention is going to be more effective in the individuals. At this stage, it is recommended to keep a journal that allows the researcher to write down all the additional observations that arise from this daily interaction.

The reflection stage is part of the process and it happens systematically. It occurs from the beginning of the research until the end because the researcher has to be reflecting on the process of researching all the time. It is particularly important to reflect on what has happened during the intervention, using the information that has been collected through the others stages. It is here when the researcher finds out how effective the changes were, what it was necessary to change the perspective of the students and how this can be implemented in the future to help students learn better.

It is important to mention that the previous stages are not fixed and linear. These stages are subjected to a variety of changes that occur as the investigation advances since there are always some issues that are going to be present during each cycle. These issues can be related to students, time, teaching topics, among other factors which demand that researchers go back to the former stages once and again. This is an ongoing task that has to be carried out in the classroom, in order to know how our students face a difficult learning situation and how we, as teachers and researchers are able to deal with it. Somekh (cited in Burns 1999)⁴³ describes “action research as ‘chameleon - like’, as the plans, actions and observations through action researchers proceed should be able to be transformed by their social, educational and political settings as well as by their personal and professional values, beliefs and histories”. In this sense, action research becomes the right track to know how our students feel in the environment of the English class, how teachers see them in regards to their strengths and weaknesses and how, from the perspective of the English class, teachers can glimpse and reach an alternative to solve teaching and learning problems.

This qualitative research project is based on action research because it involves some characteristics that seek to generate learning in the participants. Some of these characteristics

⁴³ SOMEKH, B. Teachers investigate their work. Cited by BURNS, A. Collaborative action research for English language teachers. Cambridge University Press, 1999. P.32

are related to its cyclical process whose main objective is to detect a problematic learning situation in the classroom and then make a change in the way of teaching that addresses to solve that particular situation. In this sense, action research became the most suitable methodology for this project because it allowed me, as teacher researcher, to recognize that there was an English reading comprehension problem among the tenth graders in a public school and therefore implement an action plan that could improve their understanding of texts in English. In respect to the importance of action research in teaching, Burns⁴⁴ points out that action research is an effective medium of reflection that allows teachers to propose a reflective analysis of his or her own teaching that develops a higher comprehension of the dynamics of classroom practice and makes the curriculum go in the right direction to enhance learning outcomes for students.

Three reading strategies, skimming, scanning and graphic organizers, were proposed to allow students to read in a comprehensive way and to convert the text into a meaningful language for them. The data that were collected from the observation of the students in class, the survey and the diagnostic reading test were very helpful to determine this problematic situation and thus elaborate an action plan that allowed these tenth graders to improve their reading comprehension.

3.1 CONTEXT

The pedagogical intervention took place in a public school that is located in Floridablanca, Santander, Colombia. The neighborhood around the school is considered a little dangerous, since there was a lot of crime in the past. However, the majority of people who live in this place are good workers and some of them have their own businesses. The students who go to this public school, belong to a social stratum of zero, one and two. Some of these students and their families live in human settlements where there is neither electricity nor sewage system and many of them do not have enough resources to support their education. Nevertheless, these students fight every day to stay in the educational system and finish their studies.

⁴⁴ BURNS, A. Collaborative action research for English language teachers. Cambridge University Press. 1999. p. 12

The school has three headquarters A, B and C. These students go to headquarter B because it is there where tenth and eleventh graders study. Students take three hours of English classes per week. Although, thirty- eight tenth graders were engaged in the research study and all of them consented to take part in the research, some of them did not participate in the data collection, since they were absent from school. The participants' average ages were fifteen and sixteen years old. All of them with a basic level of English.

3.2. SAMPLE POPULATION

A group of ten students was chosen to measure the effectiveness of the three reading comprehension strategies. Five of them were chosen because they demonstrated their comprehension of the strategies and tried to use them in a correct way to understand the texts. The other five students had some difficulties to understand the strategies and needed more help from the teacher and their classmates to understand the readings. All of them belong to a low socioeconomic status and some of them have to work to help their parents at home. All of them were aware of the importance of English for their lives; for this reason they were willing to participate in the study.

The sample population for this research project was chosen because of their low reading comprehension level. This group, despite their good behavior in class, did not manage to understand simple texts and consequently got bored in class and failed the exams. This was one of the main reasons to choose this group. The sample included 38 students, 20 women and 18 men, between the ages of 15 and 17 years old and their English level is A1. From these 38 students, 10 were chosen to analyze their reading process. The selection criteria were established taking into account their English level. Thus, 5 students were chosen for being outstanding from the students sample and the other 5 students were chosen because they needed more help to overcome their difficulties with the reading process.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The data collection instruments were designed and used to assemble all the information necessary to identify what reading problems participants had when facing a text in English through the use of three reading techniques called skimming, scanning and graphic

organizers. These instruments were the accurate tools to gather participants' perceptions towards reading in English and what they do to get what the text communicates.

3.3.1 Surveys. As Burns⁴⁵ considers, surveys are an alternative way of data collection that comprises predetermined questions presented in written form. They are beneficial for students because they are easy to answer and the responses of many informants or participants can be gathered. According to this author, surveys are useful because participants can answer more rapidly ~~to~~ the questions and other supplementary techniques like recordings or notes are not necessary. At the beginning of this study, a survey was used to collect information from the participants about their reading habits and preferences. See appendix B.

3.3.2 Diagnostic reading test. According to Philippot and Graves⁴⁶ "readers must think diligently about what they are reading, manipulate ideas, test passing theories and work to assemble coherent ideas if they are to understand a text deeply". Thus, the decision of applying a diagnostic reading test was made, to know how participants read and how deep they were able to read in English. The test was applied individually at the beginning of the pedagogical intervention, allowing a first perception of the participants' reading level. See Appendix C.

3.3.3 Field notes. Burns provides a clear definition of field notes. For this author, field notes "are descriptions and accounts of events in the research context which are written in an objective style. They generally include reports of non-verbal information, physical settings, group structures and records of conversations and interactions between participants"⁴⁷.

Some observations were carried out during the sessions, to understand what students did when they read, why they used specific activities as highlighting, underlining or circling

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 129

⁴⁶ PHILIPPOT Raymond, & GRAVES, Michael. *Fostering Comprehension in English Classes. Beyond the basics.* The Guilford Press, 2009.[online] P. 56

⁴⁷ BURNS. Op.cit., p. 87

some vocabulary, why they asked other classmates about the activities they had to do in class, how long they took to read a text and why they translated word by word. These observations were made during ten weeks while teaching was taking place. Some samples of these observations can be seen in Appendix D.

3.3.4 Interviews. According to Bhamani⁴⁸ interviews are a way of talking and listening to other people and a way to collect information from participants. It is a way to get knowledge from the individuals through some open questions that have to be predetermined. In this study, some individual interviews were done to ten students who were selected from the whole group. These interviews were carried out at the end of the pedagogical intervention, to know the participants' opinions about the study and how they felt during the process. Burns⁴⁹ affirms that individual interviews have the benefit of empowering the researcher to look into the learners and identify what particular problems they have with the language. In this way, interviews were useful to know participants' opinions about how they felt during the pedagogical intervention and how much they improved their reading comprehension. A sample of these interviews can be seen in appendix E.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participants in this study are tenth graders between fifteen and seventeen years old. The main objectives of the action research were explained to the students, their parents and the school principal through consent letters. The letter was written in Spanish to avoid misunderstanding. The participants, who were involved in the study were informed about the benefits, implications and impact that it would have on their academic development.

According to Universidad Industrial de Santander⁵⁰, and its ethical considerations guide, the researcher must have in mind some aspects that are oriented toward protecting the individuals who participate in the study, the institutionalism of organizations, communities

⁴⁸ BHAMANI, Annabel. Using interviews as research instruments. [online] Language Institute. Chulalongkorn University. P. 2

⁴⁹ BURNS. Op.cit., p. 119

⁵⁰ UNIVERSIDAD INDUSTRIAL DE SANTANDER. Ethical Considerations Guide.

and vulnerable groups, preserving confidentiality at all times from the different primary and secondary sources⁵¹. For the development of this investigation, the parents and students were informed and they agreed to participate in it.

They attended a meeting organized by the school and the English teacher. After explaining them the project, they agreed to be part of it. The teacher explained the advantages of the study and the importance it has to the reading process of their children. To leave an evidence of this agreement, the parents signed a consent form allowing the participation of the students in the pedagogical intervention. See appendix A. With a view to protect the individuals' identity and facilitate the analysis of their opinions and ideas and the data and findings that the investigation indicated, the sample was categorized from student 1 to student 10, taking into account the alphabetical order of their surnames. Nevertheless, all the students were under age. The information of the students was only managed by the researcher with the purpose of protecting their identities.

⁵¹ Translated by the author

4. PEDAGOGICAL DESIGN

Before implementing the pedagogical design, the participants took a diagnostic reading test, to report and identify their level of English reading comprehension. This diagnostic reading test was designed with different kinds of questions, vocabulary exercises and a graphic organizer that helped to determine the level of English performance that tenth graders have in the public school where the study was carried out. Furthermore, it generated a process to improve their reading abilities and try to overcome the difficulties and fears that these students have when reading in English. A part of this diagnostic reading test can be observed in Appendix C.

4.1 CURRICULUM DESIGN

This term is used to describe the ways in which schools and universities organize the curriculum components or factors. These factors are, in the best-case scenario, the path that teachers and students have to follow towards a common goal. All the time, teachers are asking themselves about what they should teach to allow students to learn more and better. However, this is not enough. It is necessary that teachers and students take action ~~in this process~~ and not only teach and learn but also communicate and share experiences that are going to be more rewarding for teachers and learners. It is important to include teaching reading across the curriculum with the objective to form readers with analytical skills, necessary to satisfy the requirements that schools and higher education demand. In this study, the teacher-researcher and the participants opted to modify the syllabus of the English class and work on a variety of reading texts that motivated them to read better and give reading a new meaning.

This instructional design was planned taking into account the objectives to be reached during the pedagogical intervention. Next is detailed how the curriculum of this pedagogical intervention was organized.

4.2 PEDAGOGICAL INTERVENTION

The following work plan was carried out during the pedagogical intervention held from May, 2017 to January, 2018, in three-hour sessions per week. This pedagogical intervention had three stages that were necessary to achieve the objectives proposed during the implementation: Awareness raising, practicing reading strategies and consolidating.

The Awareness raising stage relates to the knowledge of students' reading habits and a diagnostic reading test. The Practicing reading strategies stage refers to the explanation and demonstration that the teacher did about the reading strategies (skimming, scanning and graphic organizers) that participants were going to learn and practice to comprehend a text. Finally, there was a consolidating stage linked to the evaluation of the strategies where students worked independently to apply the strategies.

It is important to mention that there were some problems that hindered the normal development of the classes during the pedagogical intervention. For example, the change of schedule, parents meetings, flag raisings, masses and other extracurricular activities. Moreover, there was a teachers' strike that lasted for almost two months. This affected, to some extent, the ongoing process of the activities. Despite these situations, the students could develop all the activities that had as objective to improve their reading comprehension.

The following describes the learning experience that the students had in each stage.

1. Awareness raising

Session 1

This session began with an explanation about the importance of reading comprehension and the interaction with the text to obtain the maximum benefits from it. In this session, students had the opportunity to respond to a survey to determine their reading habits and the importance that reading has in their lives. The questions they answered were related to their reading tastes, their experience reading texts in English and their preferences when reading. This last item was key to choose the most attractive readings for them. Participants agreed on topics such as tales, contemporary stories, science fiction, fantastic stories, extreme sports, biographies and terror stories. The students worked in the computer room because the

survey was online. The results of this survey were taken into account to elaborate the lesson plans, to include the themes they liked to read about and their expectations from the reading exercise they were about to undertake. This survey can be seen in Appendix B.

In this session, the students also knew the benefits of participating in this study and they agreed with the teacher to meet with their parents to explain them the importance of this pedagogical intervention and thus sign the informed consent.

Session 2

During this session, participants had the opportunity to take a diagnostic reading test. The information obtained from the survey was relevant to know what students do when reading a text in English and what reading strategies they use to understand it. The diagnostic test was developed during a class of two hours and it consisted in a range of pre-reading, while -reading and post-reading activities. The topic of the text was related to adventure and travel because it was one of the themes that was appealing to students. In the before-reading part, participants had to complete some sentences with the accurate word and scan the text to find the answer to two questions. The majority of the students could not complete the sentences in a correct way, they had to use their dictionaries all the time and wrote incomplete answers to the questions. In the while-reading part, students had to read the text and complete multiple choice, sequencing and completion exercises. According to the analysis of their answers, the easiest exercise for them was the sequencing because many students organized the events in a correct way. However, they did not have the best results in completion and multiple choice exercises. In the post-reading part, students had to organize some information in a graphic organizer. They had to write the beginning of the story, some supporting ideas and the end of the story, including characters and setting. The majority of the students did a good job. However, they had problems when summarizing the information and choosing relevant ideas from the text. The participants worked individually, but some students tried to copy from their partners. When they were asked about this, they said that English was very difficult to understand and they were not good at finding information in an English text. This diagnostic reading text can be consulted in Appendix C.

2. Practicing reading strategies

Sessions 3, 4 and 5

From these sessions, students started to receive information about the reading strategies they were going to use during the pedagogical intervention. The third, fourth and fifth sessions were focused on scanning. Each of these sessions lasted one week. The participants had the opportunity to watch a PowerPoint presentation where the benefits of the reading strategy were explained; students also knew how scanning was done, what kind of information could be located using this strategy, the reason why some words were written in bold or italic, among other characteristics of scanning. The students worked on three worksheets that were designed in order to practice the scanning strategy. All the readings were chosen taking into account the themes they mentioned in the survey. In the first session they read the biography of Ayrton Senna. Figure 4 is a sample of the exercises students had to complete:

While- reading

A. Scan the reading quickly to complete the notes. Pay attention to numbers and dates. Remember you don't need to read every word.

1. Ayrton Senna was born on _____.
2. He won the the World Championship _____.
3. He died in _____ in Imola, San Marino, Italy.
4. Ayrton Senna won the South American Kart Championship at the age of _____.
5. Senna joined Toleman, the Formula One Team, in _____.
6. Senna won his first World Championship when he was _____ years old.
7. _____ people attended Senna's funeral in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

Figure 4 Scanning exercise

During the fourth session, students read the biography of the Colombian diver, Orlando Duque. The fifth session was dedicated to reading about extreme sports and their risks. Before starting each session, the students had the opportunity to remember what the strategy consisted of.

Sessions 6, 7 and 8

These sessions were dedicated to studying the skimming technique. At the beginning of the sixth session, the technique was taught by the teacher-researcher to enhance the skimming strategy. They had the chance to see how the skimming technique works, what kind of information readers can find using this technique, how to identify the main idea of the text, which is necessary to understand it. During these sessions, the participants worked on three worksheets that were created to reinforce the skimming technique. Their favorite themes were considered when choosing the readings for these sessions. This time was the turn of horror stories. During the seventh and eighth sessions, the teacher reminded the students how to use the skimming technique. Figure 2 is sample of one of the exercises students completed to practice skimming:



Figure 5 Skimming exercise

3. Consolidating

Sessions 9, 10, 11 and 12

These sessions were useful to practice skimming and scanning because the students reviewed how to use the techniques. They also worked on the use of graphic organizers in order to summarize the information they read and facilitate their comprehension of the texts. For this purpose, the teacher gave specific instruction on how and why it is important to use graphic organizers. This time, the students read about mysterious and historical places in Colombia

and around the world. The students completed one graphic organizer with the teacher's help and then they did it by themselves, with the teacher's feedback. The graphic organizers were used after reading to arrange and summarize information. Figure 3 is a sample of a graphic organizer used during these sessions:

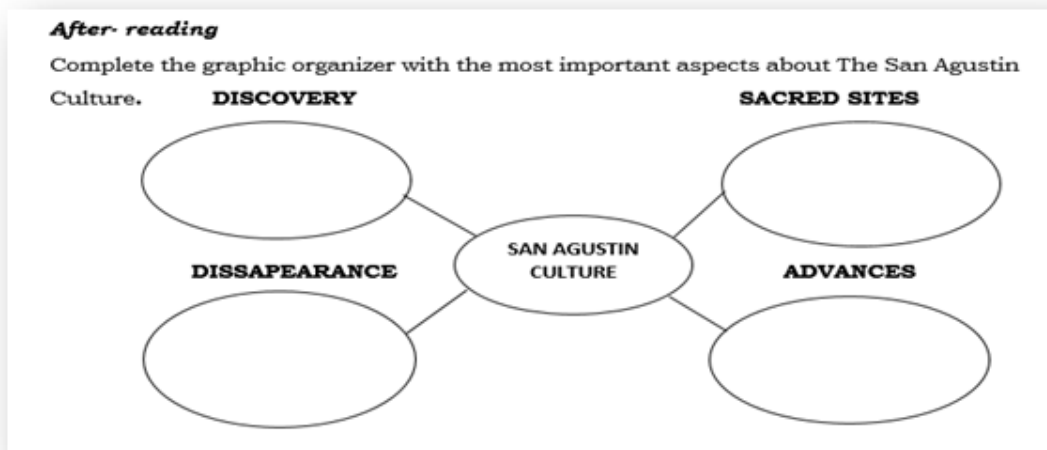


Figure 6 Sample of a graphic organizer used during a class session.

Session 12

During this last session, the participants took a reading exam. This exam was the diagnostic reading test that they took in stage 1. The decision of taking the same exam was made in order to know how much they had improved their reading comprehension from the first session to the last one.

The design of the pedagogical intervention can be consulted in Appendix F.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The following chapter is dedicated to analyzing the data collected during the pedagogical intervention that took place in a public school with tenth graders, from May 2017 to January 2018. Surveys, a diagnostic reading test, field notes, worksheets and interviews were used to collect data. The survey and the diagnostic reading test were conducted at the beginning of the study. The field notes were taken during the different sessions and the interviews were conducted at the end of the pedagogical intervention to know students' final perceptions about the study.

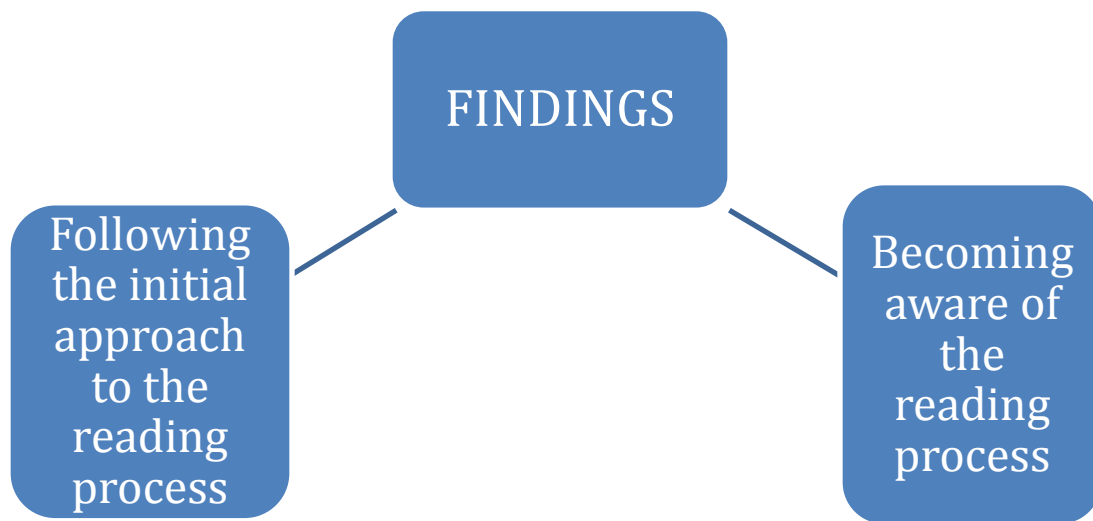
To answer the survey, the students had access to a document on Google.docs. Many of them had some problems when answering the survey because they did not have an e-mail address, so one session was dedicated to creating an e-mail and answering the survey. The information from the survey was stored in a document that can be accessed online: <https://goo.gl/vSTcym>. Ten diagnostic reading test results were analyzed individually. To do this, the questions and answers were classified in a Word document, in order to observe what activities were easier and more difficult for students. (Appendix G). The field notes or observations were also organized by date and sessions. The worksheets that students completed during the twelve sessions were collected, scanned and saved in a file. Ten students answered an interview individually which was transcribed in a document. The interview consisted of ten questions related to the pedagogical intervention they took part and their answers were analyzed to find relevant and significant details that give an account of the reading process.

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data in an analytical and logical way. Thus, the techniques used for data analysis were tabulation and interpretation of data collected during the study, open and axial coding. Taking into account that the main objective of tabulation is to summarize and present data in order to facilitate a convenient interpretation. According to

Kumar⁵² tabulation involves the classification and record of important information that must be analyzed and compared. It is a way to observe and analyze the information with all its similarities and differences. In this sense, tabulation occurred in this pedagogical intervention when participants answered the survey about their reading habits, when the teacher researcher made notes of her observations in the classroom, when students answered the final interview to know their perceptions of the process and worked on the activities and worksheets proposed during the different working sessions. This information presented in tables allowed the researcher to identify the participants' perceptions about the reading exercise not only in their native language but also in English. It was also useful to know how much commitment there is on the part of students' families since they can largely influence learners' reading habits. This information can be observed in Appendix D, H and I. The lesson plans designed for the different sessions were also very useful to organize the sequence of readings and activities, accurate for their level and expectations. See Appendix J.

After analyzing data, two main categories emerged. These are analyzed in the following lines.

⁵² KUMAR, Rajendra. Sociological methods and techniques.[online], 2008. P.397



5.1 FOLLOWING THE INITIAL APPROACH TO THE READING PROCESS

To start this reflection, it is useful to mention that comprehension depends, to a great extent, not only on the linguistic knowledge that is necessary to understand a sentence and consequently a paragraph, but also on the knowledge that individuals have of the surrounding world and the relationships that they can establish between the known and the unknown things around them. Thus, this first category intends to explain how students started the reading process at the beginning of the pedagogical intervention with their own knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and their own way to face the texts in English and how this knowledge expanded and changed as the process moved forward.

The first instrument to be analyzed was the survey that participants answered to know what reading habits they had and what they liked to read about. This information was really important to plan the classes and design the worksheets because it took into account students' likes and the way they read. Figure 4 shows their answer.

Figure 7 Their reading habits

Algunas preguntas sobre las prácticas de lectura ¿Acostumbras a leer en su tiempo libre?

24 responses



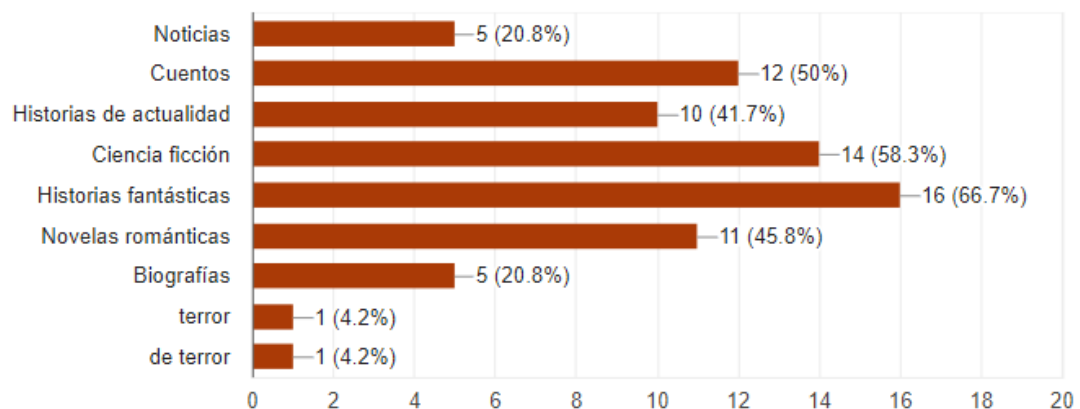
According to these answers, only 4.2% of students read every day. So, it is clear that students need to develop the initiative to read constantly that helps them to reinforce the reading strategies learnt throughout their school career and put them in practice during the rest of their lives.

With regard to reading likes, it is essential to invite students to read what they really like to read because it gives them the possibility to take action on their own development as critical readers. When teachers give them the option to choose the themes they like to read, students feel more comfortable and involved in the reading exercise. Figure 5 shows the most attractive themes for them when it comes to reading.

Figure 8 What participants like to read

Escoge los géneros que más te gustan en el momento de leer

24 responses



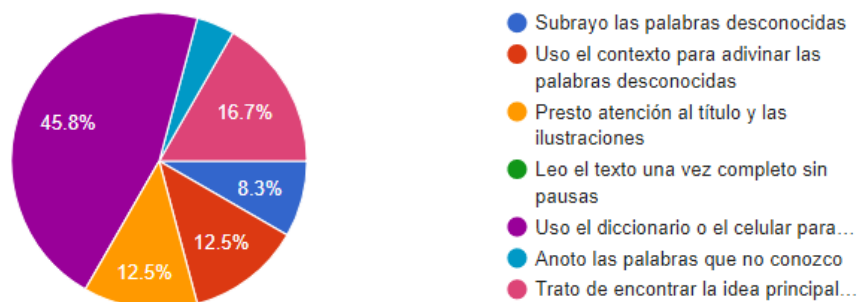
As it shows the figure 8, students had their own favorite themes, which were taken into account at the moment of designing the worksheets and preparing the classes. Giving them the opportunity to participate in the choice of the readings, was key to ensure the participation of the students and their commitment to the reading sessions.

After analyzing the information in the survey, some of their answers expressed the need to improve their reading comprehension and teach students other ways to approach the text. In one of the questions, the participants had to answer what they did when reading in English. Figure 6 illustrates their answer.

Figure 9 Students' answer to a question found in the survey.

¿Qué haces cuando lees en inglés?

24 responses



These results pointed to the need of teaching students three important reading strategies that helped them to avoid the constant use of the dictionary to translate word by word. According to the classroom observations, this situation can be to some extent, harmful for students since some of them have problems when looking for and choosing the correct words in the dictionary. They do not have the ability to find the words quickly, even in Spanish

dictionaries. Consequently, this slows the class work down and sometimes students make mistakes at the moment of choosing the correct word according to the context. Furthermore, many students think that reading is difficult because they cannot get a full understanding of the text and the truth is that they have not developed the correct reading strategies to overcome this weakness. Figure 7 shows the priority to teach reading strategies for the purpose of making the reading exercise easier.

Figure 10 Obstacles students have when reading

¿Crees que leerías más si...

24 responses

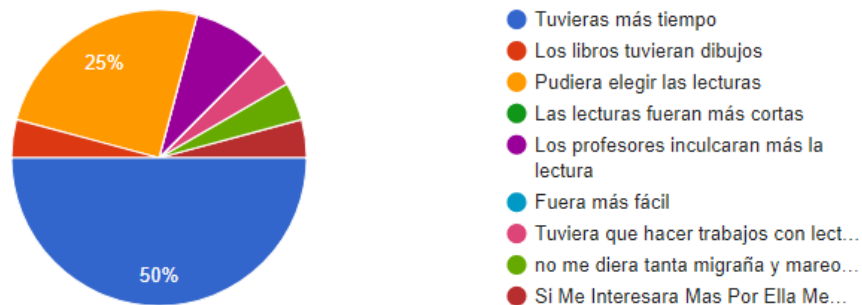


Figure 11 Scanning exercise

B. SCAN. You are going to read about two friends' travel adventure. Quickly scan the reading to answer the questions below. Then read again to check your answers.

1. Where did they start and end their trip? How did they travel?

Gregg Bleatner's dreams was to travel The ~~x~~ america. From To to bottom

2. How many kilometers (or miles) did they travel?

1600 kilometer. ~~x~~

In the first question, the answer is wrong because the participant does not reply specifically to the question it is being asked. In the second question, the person answers with a number, but it is not the number of kilometers that the main characters of the story travel. In this sense, the participants who answered wrong could not scan the story in order to find the correct information. They got confused with other numbers presented in the text.

After the scanning exercise, the participants had to complete an exercise related to skimming. This time, students had to do a first reading of the story with the purpose of finding the answer to some specific questions. Figure 9 shows this exercise.

Figure 12 Skimming Exercise

READING COMPREHENSION

A. Multiple choice. Choose the best answer for each question.

- Another title for this reading could be _____.
 - Cycling the Americas from top to ^{Fondo}bottom. *and an ciclo Por America*
 - The Southernmost city in the world.
 - ☒ Things to see and do in Alaska and Argentina. *cosas que ver*
 - Argentina: The land of adventure. *Tierra*
- Which sentence about Gregg and Brooks' trip is **NOT** true? *barato*
 - ☒ To pay for the trip, they saved the money and traveled cheaply on the road. *no*
 - Only Gregg made the complete trip from Alaska to Argentina. *juste*
 - During their trip, they ^{conoci}met people from all ^{todo}over the world.
 - In Guatemala, Gregg got sick and went back to the U.S.A. *enfure*
- Which of these words or phrases is most similar in meaning to *flexible* in line 29?
 - able to change easily
 - careful
 - ☒ well-planned
 - ☒ difficult

In this exercise, 80 % of students had bad results, so it was necessary to reinforce this reading technique (skimming) because none of the participants got all the correct answers. In respect of figure 9, this participant had serious problems when skimming information about the title and the first parts of the five paragraphs of the text. The participant also tried to translate some words to understand the questions and the answers.

Concerning the sequencing exercise, only one participant could complete the activity

successfully. The other individuals had problems when reading the story and finding the correct order of events. Sequencing, is very useful when students try to comprehend the text, since they have the task to identify the components of the story and organize the information and the events properly. Figure 10 shows the sequencing exercise that students had to complete.

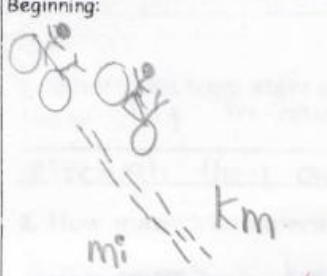
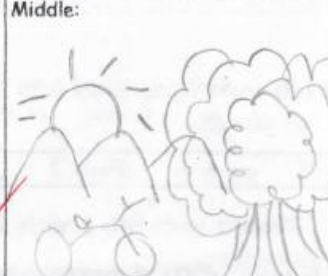
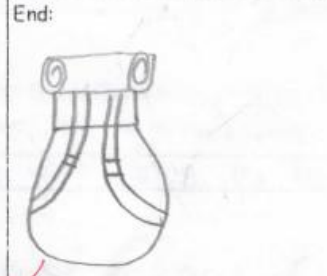
Figure 13 Sequencing exercise

- B. SEQUENCING.** Put the events below in order from 1-6,
- 6 X Gregg and Brooks start their trip in Prudhoe Bay, Alaska.
 - 4 X Gregg reaches Ushuaia, Argentina.
 - 7 X Gregg goes on a 1,000-mile bike ride.
 - 2 X Gregg and his friend Brooks talk about biking from Alaska to Argentina.
 - 5 X Brooks returns to the U.S.A. Gregg continues without him.
 - 3 X Gregg and Brooks work to save money.

The poor results achieved in this exercise demonstrates that the participants had some problems to identify the components that characterize the order of the story and its different moments. Understanding the organization of a text is necessary for students since it helps to build comprehension.

Regarding the vocabulary exercise and the graphic organizers, the majority of students got better results. Some of the participants successfully completed the exercises and understood the meaning of the words. They invested their efforts to read the story and summarize the ideas in order to figure out the text with their own ideas. Figure 11 shows a sample of students work.

Figure 14 A graphic organizer completed by one of the participants

Basic Story Map		Instructions: Fill in the boxes to show how your story developed.		Name:
Title: Travel adventure: ALASKA TO ARGENTINA Author:		Characters: ?	Setting: ?	
Beginning:  <p>Gegg Blackney's dream was to travel the Americas from top to bottom. The two friends talked and slowly formed a plan: They would travel from Alaska to Argentina.</p>	Middle:  <p>during their trip, Gregg and Brooks cycled through deserts, rainforests, and mountains. They visited modern cities and ancient ruins such as Machu Picchu in Peru.</p>	End:  <p>Near Guatemala, Brooks had to return to the U.S. and Gregg continued without him. The trip taught both men a lot about traveling, especially if you travel abroad.</p>		

The student who worked on this graphic organizer connected her ideas with drawings for the purpose of creating an image of the story. Even though she did not complete all the spaces, her work is clear and extremely positive. The participant connected some concepts and created her own ideas. After talking to her, she emphasized that using drawings helped her to understand better and construct a text that she can easily remember. So this concludes the initial approach that participants had with reading in order to create a closer relation between what they read and internalize.

5.2 BECOMING AWARE OF THE READING PROCESS

After analyzing the data collected in the classes, ten lesson plans and worksheets were designed in order to help participants to understand what the reading process implies and how some reading strategies (skimming, scanning and graphic organizers) can be integrated in the reading process. At the end of the pedagogical intervention, participants responded to an interview with a view to finding out how they felt during and after the reading process.

The results that were obtained during the process of English reading improvement, are presented below.

The first three lessons were thought to develop the scanning technique. At the beginning of the first lesson, students were not familiarized with this reading strategy, so it was useful and necessary to present how the scanning technique works and what reading exercises aim to develop this strategy in students. After presenting the strategy, some participants said that they followed some steps when reading, but they did not know they were using strategies. Gersten, Lynn, Williams and Baker ⁵³ affirm that students do not have appropriate strategies for problem situations, and reading comprehension becomes a problem for many students. They do not realize that they can monitor their comprehension and carry out a variety of actions that activate their prior knowledge and lead them to obtain what the text has.

The following lines provide a description of what participants did during the reading sessions and how they felt at the end of the pedagogical intervention.

The first three sessions were designed to introduce participants to the scanning and skimming techniques and use them in the proposed texts. According to the first observations, is determined that students did not know the techniques. For this reason, the first session was totally guided by the teacher-researcher. During the first sessions, students used their dictionaries and cellphones to translate every word of the text. However, this translation system was changing as the participants moved forward to a more independent work in the classroom, implementing the reading strategies towards that end. One of the interview questions that participants had to answer as part of the data collection, illustrates this statement. The question, written in Spanish for them, says:

¿Encontraste fácil o difícil el uso de estrategias para mejorar la comprensión lectora en inglés?

Did you find easy or difficult the use of strategies to improve the reading comprehension in English? The following lines illustrate some of the students' answers.

Student number 6 answered the question in the following way:

"Fácil la manera en que me dan las herramientas para poder para mejorar mi inglés". (It is easy

⁵³ GERSTEN, Russell, FUCHS, Lynn., WILLIAMS, Joanna & BAKER, Scott. Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies to Students with Learning Disabilities: a review of research. Review of Educational Research [online], 2001. No.2.P.280

because I have the tools to improve my English).

Student number 7 also expresses her opinion as follows:

“Sí, realmente ese tiempo mediante estrategias ayuda a la comprensión lectora y es más agradable”

(Yes, reading strategies really help to reading comprehension and it is more enjoyable)

Student number 8 mentioned that this time, reading comprehension was fastest than before.

These were his words:

“Fácil, con gran rapidez logré entender con estas estrategias. No gasté tanto tiempo buscando una respuesta”.

(Easy, I was able to understand very fast with these strategies. I did not spend much time looking for an answer)

During the fifth class session, students started to evidence some progress on reading comprehension. It was observed that participants located the information they needed in more detail. Some of them were able to relate the new vocabulary with the context, without spending a lot of time looking for the new words in the dictionary. The following observation made in class can be taken as evidence of this progress:

Se nota el trabajo de lectura global y lectura selectiva de los estudiantes ya que poco a poco encuentran la información requerida.

English translation: Overall and selective reading is made by students little by little in order to find the data required.

Concerning the texts chosen for the different reading sessions, it was concluded that were striking and accurate for their ages. Their opinion to choose the readings was taking into account and consequently they were more involved and committed in the reading exercise. Some of these readings were linked to the class of Spanish and Social Studies and this helped participants to understand better the information not only in a written way but also in a spoken way. During the interview, they had to answer the following question:

¿Te gustaron las lecturas que se escogieron para las sesiones de clase de inglés? ¿Por qué?

(Did you like the texts that were chosen for the English class? Why?)

Participant number 4 gave the following answer:

“Sí, porque eran temas interesantes, como de miedo, lugares que no conocíamos, y además venían muy explicadas, aunque algunas cosas no entendía”

(Yes, because they were interesting themes, scary, places that we did not know, and they were well explained, although I did not understand certain things)

When students have opportunities for choice in the classroom, they feel with power and teachers can discover amazing things about students that, in this case, are manifested through reading and thus assure their participation and success in reading comprehension. They are not only satisfied with the information that they receive in the classroom, but also they want to inquire about the theme they are reading about.

Findings from the observations also reinforce the fact of having a sequence when reading. It means that students developed a series of steps that led participants to read more and better, which was not always the case. Thus, there was always an activation of previous knowledge before starting the reading process that allowed students to put the learnt strategies in practice. On September 1st, the teacher wrote the following lines in order to illustrate this learning moment:

Se evidencian las etapas de inducción al tema y cómo abordarlo desde la estrategia propuesta. También hay un desarrollo del tema y un cierre.

English translation

“It is evident the stages of induction to the theme and how it must be addressed from the proposed strategies. There is also a development of the subject and a conclusion. “

Furthermore, several reading exercises were proposed in order to bridge the gap between what students know and what they are going to learn and thus prepare them to work on the reading. With this in mind, the following scanning exercise was suggested as a way to make the reading task easier for students, since it was clear they did not have much information

about the important person they were going to read.

B. Read the timeline of Amelia Earhart's life.

How did she become a famous pioneer? _____

What record did she break? _____

Amelia Earhart (1897 – 1937)

1918: Sees a small airplane take off in the snow of Toronto, Canada. Decides she wants to fly.

1921: Becomes a pilot at age 24.

May 1932: Breaks a world record: is the first woman to fly a plane alone across the Atlantic Ocean.



May 20, 1937: Wants to be the first woman to fly a plane around the world. Flies with guide Fred Noonan across the U.S.A. From California, south to Brazil and across Africa, Asia and Australia.

June 29, 1937: Earhart and Noonan arrive in New Guinea.

July 2, 1937: They take off again, heading for an island in the Pacific Ocean. They are never seen again.

Before doing this exercise, students expressed that they did not have any idea about who Amelia Earhart was. Now, they knew some important dates about her life and why she became famous. It was a valuable exercise because it prepared the participants for the upcoming concepts and information that was necessary to understand the text. This exercise activated what students knew about women aviators in Colombia and created small discussions about the role that women play in aircraft industry.

Concerning to graphic organizers, students were trained to complete and use some of them to organize the information and remember concepts or new vocabulary that was difficult for them. At the beginning of the pedagogical intervention, the majority of participants did not understand the purpose of the graphic organizers. They had never used them in English class, although some of them said that the Spanish teacher used to include some graphic organizers in the worksheets for the Spanish class. However, the use of graphic organizers in the reading English class was well accepted by the participants because all of them tried to understand how to use them in order to assimilate the information in a better way. The results indicated that graphic organizers helped students to extract the most important facts from the readings and locate them in the graphic organizers with the purpose of having a full picture of the text. When students were asked about the importance of graphic organizers to understand a text, all of them agreed with their positive effect on reading comprehension.

The following excerpt illustrates what student number 7 said about the use of graphic organizers in reading:

“Me ayudó bastante a entender lo que debía sacar del texto y colocar en el gráfico. Es útil para centrarse en la información que uno realmente necesita”.

English translation

“It helped me a lot to understand what I needed to extract from the text and write it in the graphic. It is useful to focus on the information that I really need”.

This perceptions can be supported by Manoli and Papadopoulou⁵⁴ when affirming that graphic organizers not only assist students in activating prior knowledge but also in gaining a comprehension of the text structure, identifying and connecting ideas which will be easier to recall and retain. Figure 14 shows the most important ideas of a text organized by student number 8.

As it can be observed, this participant could extract the information he needed from the text, in order to complete the graphic organizer appropriately. In this sense, the graphic organizers reduced the tendency that students have to wander through the text without understanding what they are looking for. In other words, graphic organizers let participants to emphasize on concrete information that is difficult to find in the absence of the necessary tools to face the text. Graphic organizers also gave participants the possibility to rule out unnecessary information and obtain a visual presentation of the ideas, which really stimulates their minds and allows students to retain more information. In Alvermann's words ⁵⁵ graphic organizers not only improve comprehension but also encourage encoding strategies that develop retention. Thus, graphic organizers become powerful instruments that allow our minds to store information in a permanent way by means of meaningful categories.

Findings clearly indicate that skimming, scanning and graphic organizers may increase students' ability in reading comprehension since the exercise of reading is seen from another perspective, where the teaching and learning process is reciprocal and continuous.

⁵⁴ MANOLI, Polyxeni & PAPADOPOULOU, Maria. Graphic Organizers as a Reading Strategy: Research Findings and Issues. Creative Education [online], 2012. No. 3 p. 354

⁵⁵ ALVERMANN, Donna. The Compensatory Effect of Graphic Organizers on Descriptive Text. Journal of Educational Research. [online], 2001 P. 45

Furthermore, the collected data also revealed that these reading techniques helped students to see reading in a more positive and enjoyable way, which leads learners to read more and better. By means of these techniques, students could experiment a different way to address a reading in a more comprehensive way. Here there is a sample of how the student number 4 retrieved some information from the reading "The babysitter" and completed a graphic organizer.

Figure 15 Graphic organizer when scanning and skimming

The graphic organizer consists of two rectangular boxes. The top box has a title "Words related to horror movies and books I found when scanning the reading 'The Babysitter'" and contains the handwritten words "forest, clown, Knife, dark room, isolated, haunted house". The bottom box has a title "Main Idea I found when skimming the reading 'The Babysitter'" and contains the handwritten sentence "A babysitter was scared because of the clown and she disappeared".

Words related to horror movies and books I found when scanning the reading "The Babysitter"
forest, clown, Knife, dark room, isolated, haunted house

Main Idea I found when skimming the reading "The Babysitter"
A babysitter was scared because of the clown and she disappeared

The information could be more complete but it was a good step towards students understood from the text.

At the end of the pedagogical intervention the participants applied the initial text again in order to see their progress and how they used the reading techniques taught during the pedagogical intervention. The results were positive because the participants tried to do the exercises without the need to use the dictionary over and over during the reading exercise. They also remembered more vocabulary through the images that the text offered. The participants went straight to the information that they needed to answer the questions and complete the graphic organizer. The teacher-researcher can observe the remarkable skill that some of them developed to address the reading.

It was satisfactory to see how the five students who were chosen for their low scores in the diagnostic test, improved their comprehension of the texts and got better results in the reading exercises. They drew main ideas easier and learnt to see all the elements of the texts as specific requirements to understand them. The other five students who did better when

taking the diagnostic text, got improvement in the comprehension of the texts. They used the graphic organizers to classify their ideas better and demonstrated themselves that they can read and retain useful information.

To sum up, the way students read a text in English, depends significantly on the way teachers assume the reading process in the classroom. It is not about leaving anything to chance, but give students the accurate tools and techniques to develop this skill. Skimming, scanning and graphic organizers were useful for reading and comprehension because it allowed students to relate concepts and ideas. Moreover, these techniques fostered the participation of the students from the beginning of the study. They learnt to focus on the details and main ideas and use them to understand the text in a better way.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

This pedagogical intervention reported by means of a qualitative investigation the experience that a group of tenth graders had in order to improve their reading comprehension in English. The general objective of the study was to lead students towards a comprehensive reading by means of three reading techniques called skimming, scanning and graphic organizers. So, the following lines inform the conclusions reached during the process taking into account the general objective of the investigation and the specific objectives proposed at the beginning of the study.

Concerning to the first objective, students had the opportunity to take a diagnostic reading test with the purpose to analyze their level of reading comprehension and the use of reading strategies that help them to comprehend texts almost entirely. This reading test was created, since we cannot assume that all students have the abilities necessary to be successful in reading in a foreign language, so it was crucial to identify their strengths and weaknesses with the purpose to guide the future instruction and activities based on reading. Based on the activities worked in class, it could be concluded that students needed to set the use of dictionaries and translators aside and focus on the text itself, in order to see the text as a whole, with different exercises but interconnected.

In respect of the second and third objectives, it was concluded that skimming, scanning and graphic organizers were useful for students because they helped them to condense the main ideas of the text, understand a text as a whole, locate specific information in order to answer specific questions, and comprehend words within a context without resorting to the dictionary. The learners participated in the pedagogical intervention in an active manner because the sessions were thought taking into account their likes and necessities. At the beginning of the sessions, students did not know how to use these reading techniques, but as the sessions progressed, their confidence with the techniques increased.

With reference to the fourth and fifth objectives, is right to conclude that the readings chosen to increase their reading comprehension, were interesting and appropriate for their ages. It was a point in favor of the participants and the pedagogical intervention, to have listened to some readings because students could strengthen their listening skill and enhance their pronunciation. They also improved the ability to observe everything there is around the text and that is related to it. It means, pay close attention to the illustrations, the font, the numerical references, titles and subtitles among other features that add importance to the text.

These three reading strategies were also useful to increase participants' concentration and focus on what they are really looking for. In assessing the results achieved, the most of participants were able to highlight concepts and to establish significant association between previous and new knowledge.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the effect that the pedagogical intervention caused on the research teacher, since it was possible to create an accurate learning environment while guiding the reading process and transforming the way they read.

Considering the research result findings, future research could be directed to recommend the skimming, scanning and graphic organizers because they were effective when reading and understanding. Changing attitudes toward reading was part of the motivation that participants felt during the pedagogical intervention, and this can be achieved when students have the opportunity to choose what they want to read. These reading techniques allowed students to become aware of their own reading process and this is something that teachers should take into account if they want to increase the reading comprehension in their students. Public schools should create a reading comprehension strategy program that encourages students to read in class because time is not enough to develop this skill. It means, foster reading from elementary school and continue working on it through the schooling stage.

This study also suggests the implementation of skimming, scanning and graphic organizers to improve high school students' English reading comprehension when applying Saber Pro

Exam, which measures their capacity to comprehend texts and retrieve essential information. In conclusion, reading comprehension needs to be taught and motivated with a view to learners love reading and realize its importance in the academic and work sphere. At the end of this study, there was a serious difference of participants' reading comprehension before and after using skimming, scanning and graphic organizers to understand texts written in English.

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