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**EFFECTIVENES IN APPLYING READING STRATEGIES
WHEN READING IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE.**

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***To my father,
whom I miss every day.***

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Abstract

EFL learners often fail to reach a level of reading ability that allows them to comprehend texts in English and to reach a level of reading that lets them feel confident when interpreting a given text. Teaching reading strategies might be helpful in improving the reading skills of EFL students. This thesis investigates whether reading strategies instruction might be effective in improving reading skills for Argentinian high school students.

To carry out the investigation, the following questions were considered: (i) Does unawareness of the use of reading strategies result in a lack of understanding a text in a foreign language?; (ii) Is reading strategy instruction useful for students?; (iii) Can EFL/ESL learners improve their English reading comprehension using metacognitive reading strategies? In order to answer these questions, an experimental study was done where students from ages 13 to 17 were randomly divided into two groups and given the same texts in English. However, one of the two groups received precise instruction for several weeks on reading strategies such as anticipating, predicting, skimming, scanning, use of cognates and summarizing. The results revealed that the students who were given instruction about the different reading strategies were better able to understand the given texts than those who were in the group that did not receive any instruction. This shows that teaching reading strategies and using them when reading a text in a foreign language help EFL students to improve considerably their reading comprehension.

Key words

Strategies – reading strategies – Metacognitive strategies – metacognition – reading strategy instruction – English as a Second language (ESL) – English as a Foreign Language (EFL) –

Introduction

There is a relationship between learning strategy use and positive learning outcomes. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1990) explain how learners' perceptions of academic ability (perceived self-efficacy) can impact on achievement. The authors see learning strategies as enabling students to regulate their behavior and environment as well as their covert functioning.

A study called "The good language learner" (The GLL; Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978) was undertaken in mid 1970s where the characteristics and learning strategies of successful language learners were considered. The aim of the study was to see if successful learners were different from less successful ones in personality, attitudes, cognitive styles, motivation or learning experiences in the past. Moreover, the authors wanted to determine if success in language learning and learning strategies, techniques and activities were connected in any way. Results revealed that less skilled students used strategies occasionally, unconnected and in an uncontrolled manner (Abraham & Vann, 1987; Chamot et al., 1996), whereas more successful learners used the strategies in an organized and appropriate way when doing L2 tasks.

In a similar way, Gascoigne (2005), revealed that efficient reading skills are a facilitator for academic progress and success. Because reading techniques help students to understand what they read, they should be able to use the techniques efficiently. One tool that can help English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students to be successful readers is the implementation of reading strategies. Through them, students can transfer the strategies they use when reading in their native language to reading in the language they are learning. An effective reader is the one who can use the strategies to overcome a problem when reading a difficult task. Also, effective readers often monitor their understanding, and use a reading strategy to help them understand the meaning of a text. Effective readers are "independent" readers who can constantly monitor their understanding of the text as they read it. These kinds of readers are predicting, questioning, summarizing, connecting, clarifying and evaluating as they read, mainly by involving themselves with the author.

To have a better comprehension of texts, students mainly use metacognitive strategies. These are crucial for the learning process. According to John Flavell (1976), metacognitive is "one's knowledge concerning one's own cognitive processes and outcomes or anything related to them" (Flavell, 1976: 232). Flavell further explains that metacognition is "the active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration of these processes in relation to the cognitive objects or data on which they bear, usually in the service of some concrete goal or objective" (Flavell, 1976: 232). Baird (1990) states that metacognition refers to the

knowledge, awareness and control of one's own learning. Metacognition development can be described as a progress in one's metacognitive abilities, i.e., the move to greater knowledge, awareness and control of one's learning, Flavell (1979) and Baried (1990). In one word, students with better-developed metacognitive skills typically have a better sense of their own strengths and needs related to the learning process and have a larger range of learning strategies. Moreover, they are likely to select and use the learning strategy that is most effective in helping them address a particular learning task.

Statement of the problem

Students between 13 to 17 who attend school at CEM 36 and CEM 45 in San Carlos de Bariloche have an English level that goes from beginner to pre-intermediate. Most of them find it difficult to comprehend written texts in the foreign language. This is observed not only in exams but mainly in everyday class work.

The aim of the investigation is to study if there is a relationship between students' proficiency and the use of learning strategies when reading a text in the foreign language English. Are learning strategies relevant when reading a text in a foreign language? Does their use reflect improvement in the comprehension of texts? The absence of the use of strategies such as prediction, cognates, deduction, previous knowledge on the topic, skimming, scanning and summarizing confuse and frustrate students visibly affecting their performance in the language.

The study will be carried out in four weeks where students in the experimental group are taught and shown the different strategies to be applied when reading a given text.

Justification

There are many reasons why learning strategies are exceptionally valuable in language teaching and as a learning tool. Generally speaking, learning strategies help students understand information and solve problems, process information, remember new data, and so on. Those students who do not know or use good learning strategies often learn passively and ultimately fail in school. Learning strategy instruction focuses on making students more active learners by teaching them how to learn and how to use what they have learned to solve problems and be successful. Teaching strategies that promote critical thinking make students get engaged in an active learning process and therefore they help them to learn effectively.

Students will benefit from teachers' help to develop their learning strategies. It is important to remember that students' failure to engage actively in the learning process might

not have to do with their being lazy or unprepared, but to their not knowing *how* to learn. Helping students develop the learning strategies that best fit a specific content will result in more effective and efficient teaching and learning. The goal of education is better conceived as helping students improve the intellectual tools and learning strategies needed to acquire the necessary knowledge to think productively. As a proverb states: “*Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime*”. Related to teaching and learning, teachers should not provide students with answers but teach them the strategies to work out the answers themselves as they will be managing their own learning.

Hypothesis

Students’ performance in reading comprehension is higher when they make use of adequate reading strategies.

Objectives

General objectives:

- Investigate if students currently employ any reading strategies in the EFL reading process.

Specific objectives:

- Acquaint students with the different metacognitive strategies;
- Enhance students’ abilities to study and practice reading strategies to build up their reading skills;
- Determine whether the implementation and use of reading strategies can help students to improve their reading performance.

Methodology

The study was done with two groups of people who were willing to participate:

1. **Experimental group:** High school students from 1st to 3rd year that received instruction on the different metacognitive strategies;
2. **Control group:** High school students from 1st to 3rd year that did not receive any instruction on the different metacognitive strategies.

The instruments used were:

- I. A questionnaire, in order to identify strategies students already use when reading in English;
- II. Short texts and activities to work with different pre-reading, while reading and after reading strategies.

The questionnaire and the activities were carried out with around 80 secondary school students, aged 13 to 17, from two different state high-schools in the city of San Carlos de Bariloche.

Chapter I

1. Reading

1.1. Defining reading

Although giving a definition of reading is not easy, it is known that it is one of the most important academic language skills for students learning English as a second (ESL) and foreign language (EFL). “Reading is the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of a number of interrelated sources of information” (Anderson et al., 1985); “Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction among: (1) the reader’s existing knowledge; (2) the information suggested by the text being read; and (3) the context of the reading situation” (Wixson, Peters, Weber, & Roeber, 1987). In addition, reading contributes to independent learning regardless of the purpose of the reader (Celce-Murcia, 2001).

Very often, students cannot understand main ideas and supporting facts of a text. This happens for several reasons: sometimes the reader needs more background information to interpret the text, sometimes the basic information for a particular reader is missing, and sometimes the reader lacks the strategies he/she needs to read any given text. Whatever the reason is, reading failure leads to disappointment for both students and teachers.

1.2. Models of reading

Two contrasting models that have become very well known in the field of teaching over the past decades are the “bottom-up” and “top-down” models. A third one, the interactive model, is a combination of both.

Bottom-up models see reading as a process in which the reader reconstructs the messages in a text by first recognizing the smallest textual components such as letters or words. Then, the reader moves to larger parts of the text such as phrases or sentences so as to comprehend the written work. (Carrel, Devine & Eskey, 1988). This model views the text as a “chain of isolated words, each of which is to be deciphered individually” (Martinez-Lang, 1955:70), and the reader as someone who “approaches the text by concentrating exclusively on the combination of letters and words in a purely linear manner” (Martinez-Lang, 1955:70). Meaning is understood through analysis of individual parts of the language and the reader processes language in a sequential way, “combining sounds or letters to form words, then combining words to form phrases, clauses, and sentences of the text” (Shrum & Glisan, 2000: 123).

On the other hand, top-down models view reading as a process in which the reader’s background knowledge plays a critical role. The reader is an active participant in this process,

making predictions about the text, bringing hypothesis and using the information given in the text to confirm or refute the predictions made. (Carrel et al., 1988)

Some reading theorists identified the importance of both the text and the reader in the reading process. Therefore, a model that combined both bottom-up and top-down models emerged: the interactive model (Rumelhart 1977). Here, reading is the process of combining textual information with the data the reader brings to a text. In this model, good readers are both good decoders and good interpreters of a given text, where their decoding skills become more automatic but no less important as their reading skill develops. (Eskey, 1988).

1.3. Fluent reading

Reading does not only have to do with eye movement but also with a mental process. According to Grabe (1991), fluent reading involves many concepts like: “rapid, purposeful, interactive, comprehending, flexible, and gradually developing” (Grabe, 1991: 378). Fluent reading is rapid because the reader reads at a sufficient rate that helps him/her to make connections and inferences crucial for comprehension; it is interactive because the reader uses his/her background knowledge so as to be able to understand the text in a better way; reading is comprehending in the sense that the reader expects to understand the text; it is flexible since the reader uses several strategies to read efficiently; reading is purposeful since the reader reads for a reason.

Within the context of fluent reading in L1 and L2, Grabe (1991) identifies 6 components of reading skills: “(1) automatic recognition skills, (2) vocabulary and structural knowledge, (3) formal discourse structure knowledge, (4) content/world background knowledge, (5) synthesis and evaluation skills/strategies, and (6) metacognitive knowledge and skills monitoring” (Grabe 1991:379). The components are supposed to occur simultaneously and to support each other. The first two are considered bottom-up processes that depend on the text for activation and the other four processes are top down, content-driven processes inherent in the reader and applied to comprehension of the text. The first process mentioned allows readers to identify letters and words without being consciously aware of the process. The second one, indicates the connection between learning vocabulary and reading comprehension; readers need to know a large percentage of the words in any given text in order to comprehend the meaning of the reading or to guess the meaning of words unfamiliar to them. The third component proposed by Grabe (1991), the formal discourse structure knowledge, states that knowledge of the structure of formal discourse assists the learner in understanding and remembering the text. The fourth process, the content / world background knowledge, reveals that activating the reader’s knowledge of the subject matter and cultural content of the text is a significant factor in both reading comprehension and memory. Research shows that L2 learners can better

remember information from texts if the topic is familiar to them and if it is based on their own culture than if the topic or culture is less familiar or distant from students' reality. The fifth process, Synthesis and Evaluation Skills, proposes that fluent readers not only comprehend the text, but also make judgements about the information and make inferences on what the author tried to express. The last process called Metacognitive Knowledge and Skills, states that metacognitive knowledge is knowledge about how learners think and self-regulate their cognitive processes. In the reading process, metacognitive skills include recognizing main ideas, adjusting reading rate for skimming, scanning, paraphrasing, and summarizing, guessing meaning from word formation rules, prefixes, and suffixes, and taking notes. The ability to apply metacognitive strategies to the reading process is crucial to effective reading.

1.4. Reading in a second language

As Grabe states: "because different languages vary in their phonological, orthographic, morphological, syntactic and semantic systems, a given L1 and L2 could be quite different from each other linguistically" (Grabe (2008:109). This linguistic distance between any given L1 and L2 will be a factor to consider in L2 reading comprehension.

Research over the past years has demonstrated that the claim that reading is a universal process is not completely true. There are many aspects of reading that are likely universal: "All readers make use of visual word-recognition processes while reading and engage in phonological processing in reading at the earliest possible moment that the orthography allow"; they also "use syntactic information to determine text meaning and text comprehension" (Grabe, 2008:110). However, these skills and knowledge resources do not comprise all that there is to reading comprehension. Reading in different languages involves a number of differences that affect in some way how fluent readers process a text. The main differences are the "diverse orthographies that visually recode the phonological and morphological systems of each language". (Grabe, 2008:111). Moreover, other factors such as the proficiency level in the L2 (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995), readers' background knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984), reading purpose (Grabe, 1991) and reading ability in the L1 (Carrel, 1991) also affect the process of L2 reading and strategy use.

There are large differences that the orthography of the language can impose on visual comprehension processing. The world's languages orthographies can be classified as phonological (e.g., English, Hebrew), syllabic (e.g., Japanese, Thai), or morphosyllabic (Chinese). "In a phonological language, each phoneme of the language has some graphic counterparts in the writing system. In a syllabic system, distinct graphic symbols reflect

syllables in the language. (...) Alphabetic languages may include all vowel sounds orthographically (e.g., English, Spanish) or may be mainly consonantal (e.g., Arabic, Hebrew). Alphabetic languages may be more or less reflective of morphological processes in the language". (Grabe, 2008:112) English preserves morphemes in its orthography as in the plural *s* in *cats* and *dogs*; it looks like the same morpheme, though it represents two different phonological sounds. We do not spell *dogs* as *dogz*, so the "English orthographic system preserves the same morpheme rather than spelling the words exactly as they sound" (Grabe, 2008:112). In one word, orthographies of different languages are quite likely to impact the reading process in many ways, for both L1 and L2 reading.

The phonology and morphology of different L1s can also influence reading processes. First, "languages vary considerably in their phonological system, some being quite limited" with very few phonemes, and "others being very extensive like English", which has 39 phonemes. (Grabe, 2008:112). Morphology also changes considerably in languages; the affixes and stem-form changes to the base form of the word. As the author states, "Languages like Chinese have very few grammatical or semantic morphemes" and basically Chinese words "come in only one form". English is also quite simple in terms of morphology: "though it has many derivational prefixes and suffixes, its inflectional morphology is very simple making English noun case and verb conjugation fairly easy to learn and use" (Grabe, 2008:113). According to the researcher, these examples "illustrate the impact of a language's phonology and morphology on its orthography, the variations in orthographic systems across languages, and the possible transfer of interference effects can arise, having an impact in reading" (Grabe, 2008:114).

All the variations across languages mentioned in the previous paragraphs as regards phonology, morphology and orthography, might cause some difficulties in an L1 learner when processing words in an L2. If the L1 has few vowels or consonants, the student has to identify all the different sounds, phonemes and letters present in the L2 that do not exist in his/her L1. Also, the learner needs to internalize new processes of affixation, word-stem changes and new letter-to-sound patterning that differ from his/her L1. All "these patterns of L1-L2 variation created by differences across L1s are likely to have an impact on the speed and accuracy of word-recognition processes in L2 reading development, particularly at lower levels". (Grabe, 2008:115)

Relationship between L1 and L2 reading abilities

There are two well-known hypotheses as regards the relationship between L1 and L2 reading abilities: the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH) and the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (LTH) (Clark, 1979; Cummings, 1979). These hypotheses may be also called the “Reading Universal Hypothesis” (Alderson, 1984) and the “Short Circuit Hypothesis” (Clark, 1979) respectively. The linguistic interdependence hypothesis proposes that L1 reading ability transfers to L2. It states that there is a common underlying cognitive ability between both L1 and L2, and it implies that we do not need to learn reading in L2 if we have a certain level of L1 reading ability. Here, once the ability to read has been acquired, it can be transferred to a second language. On the other hand, the linguistic threshold hypothesis states that a threshold level of L2 language ability is necessary before L1 reading ability transfers to L2; the L1 learner needs to acquire some basic linguistic knowledge before he or she is able to read in L2. In one word, language is a key factor in reading.

Alderson (1984) combined the two hypothesis mentioned into a question: “Reading in a foreign language: a reading problem or a language problem?” The “language problem” refers to a weakness in the knowledge and skills required for processing L2 linguistic properties such as orthographic, phonological, lexical and syntactic knowledge specific to L2, while “reading problem” indicates a weakness in what is called higher level mental operations such as predicting, analyzing, synthesizing, inferencing and retrieving relevant background knowledge, that operate universally across languages. Alderson (1984) concluded that the difficulties in L1 reading derive both from a language problem and a reading problem; L2 reading is more like a language problem at the lower levels of L2 proficiency and is more a reading problem at the higher levels of L2 proficiency. This supports the linguistic threshold hypothesis.

Chapter II

2. Reading strategies

2.1. Definition

Defining reading strategies is not an easy task since researchers have not yet agreed upon a common definition. According to Anderson (1991), strategies are deliberate, cognitive steps that learners take in acquiring, storing, and retrieving new information. Cohen (1986), defines reading strategies as those “mental processes that readers consciously choose to use in accomplishing reading tasks” (Cohen 1986:7). As Block (1986) defined, reading strategies are techniques and methods readers use to make their reading successful. These methods include how to conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how readers make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand. Reading strategies are "the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text and make sense of what they read" (Barnett, 1988:66)

2.2. Classification

Learning strategies are classified, mainly according to what the learner uses the strategy for in a given context. O'Malley and Chamot (in Cook 1993:113) sub-divide learning strategies into cognitive, metacognitive and social strategies. *Cognitive* strategies involve conscious ways of tackling language, such as note taking, resourcing like using dictionaries, and elaboration, like relating new information to old; *metacognitive* strategies involve planning and thinking about learning such as planning one's learning, monitoring one's own speech or writing, and how well one has done; *social* strategies mean learning by interacting with others, such as working with other students or asking the teacher's help. Tarone (1981), on the other hand, distinguishes three sets of learner strategies: learning strategies, production strategies and communication strategies. According to this view, *learning* strategies are the means by which the learner processes the L2 input to develop linguistic knowledge. *Production* strategies, on the other hand, involve learners' attempts to use L2 knowledge they have already acquired efficiently, while *communication* strategies consist of learners' attempts to communicate meanings that are beyond their linguistic competence by using such devices as paraphrase or gesture.

This research is focused on metacognitive strategies, since a large number of investigations have established a positive relationship between them and reading comprehension (Block, 1992; Carrell 1989; Gamer, 1987). These authors have found that the strategies that readers use when interacting with printed materials play an important role in reading comprehension in first and second language.

2.3. Metacognition

Metacognition is thinking about thinking. More specifically, Taylor (1999) defines metacognition as “an appreciation of what one already knows, together with a correct apprehension of the learning task and what knowledge and skills it requires, combined with the agility to make correct inferences about how to apply one’s strategic knowledge to a particular situation, and to do so efficiently and reliably.” (Taylor 1999:37) Metacognitive skills are believed to play an important role in many types of cognitive activity, including “attention, memory, problem solving, social cognition, and various types of self-control and self-instruction” (Flavell, 1985:104).

2.3.1 Metacognition and types of knowledge

To increase their metacognitive abilities, students need to possess and be aware of three kinds of content knowledge: declarative, procedural, and conditional. Declarative knowledge includes facts, beliefs, opinions, generalizations, theories, hypotheses, and attitudes about oneself, others and world events (Grupta & Cohen, 2002; Paris et al., 1983). Procedural knowledge, or knowledge of how to perform cognitive activities (Anderson, 1990; Grupta & Cohen, 2002; Paris et al., 1983), is central to much school learning. We use this type of knowledge to solve mathematical problems, summarize information, skim passages, and perform laboratory techniques. Conditional knowledge is understanding when and why to employ forms of declarative and procedural knowledge (Paris et al., 1983). Possessing essential declarative and procedural knowledge to perform a task does not guarantee students will perform it well. When students start reading, they might skim the chapter and as a consequence, perform poorly on a comprehension test. In this example, conditional knowledge includes knowing when skimming is appropriate. As Schunk states, “one might skim a newspaper or a web page for the gust of the news, but skimming should not be used to comprehend textual content. Conditional knowledge helps students select and employ declarative and procedural knowledge to fit task goals. To decide to read a chapter carefully and then do it, students should believe that careful reading is appropriate for the task at hand. Learners who do not possess conditional knowledge about when and why skimming is valuable will employ it at inappropriate times” (Schunk, 2012:185)

Conditional knowledge is an integral part of self-regulated learning (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, 1998). Self-regulated learning requires that students decide which learning strategy to use prior to engaging in a task (Zimmerman, 1994, 2000). While students are engaged in a task, they assess task progress (e.g., their level of comprehension) using

metacognitive processes. When comprehension problems are detected, students alter their strategy based on conditional knowledge of what might prove more effective.

Table
Comparison of types of knowledge (Schunk, 2012:185)

Type	Knowing	Examples
Declarative	That	Historical dates, number facts, episodes (what happened when), task features (stories have a plot setting), beliefs (“I am good in Math”)
Procedural	How	Math algorithms, reading strategies (skimming, scanning, summarizing), goals (breaking long-term goals into sub-goals)
Conditional	When, Why	Skim the newspaper because it gives the gist but does not take much time; read texts carefully to gain understanding.

2.3.2. Metacognition and learning

According to Schunk, metacognition involves two related sets of skills. On the one hand, one should know what skill, strategies and resources is needed according to the task. Examples of this are “finding main ideas, rehearsing information, forming associations or images, using memory techniques, organizing material, taking notes or underlining, and using test-taking techniques” (Schunk, 2012:186). On the other hand, Baker & Brown (1984) state that one must know “how and when to use these skills and strategies to ensure the task is completed successfully. These monitoring activities include checking level of understanding, predicting outcomes, evaluating the effectiveness of efforts, planning activities, deciding how to save time, and revising or switching to other activities to overcome difficulties” (as cited in Schunk, 2012:186). Metacognitive activities reflect the strategic application of declarative, procedural, and conditional knowledge to tasks. Since metacognitive skills develop slowly, children are not completely aware of which cognitive processes several tasks involve.

2.3.3. Metacognition and reading

Metacognition is relevant to reading because it is involved in understanding and monitoring reading purposes and strategies (Paris, Wixson, & Palincsar, 1986). Typically, beginning and poorer readers do not monitor their comprehension or adjust their strategies accordingly (Baker & Brown, 1984). Older and skilled readers are better at comprehension monitoring than are younger and less-skilled readers, respectively (Alexander et al., 1995; Paris et al., 1986). Metacognition is involved when learners set goals, evaluate goal progress, and make necessary corrections (McNeil, 1987). Skilled readers do not approach all reading

tasks identically; they determine their goal: find main ideas, read for details, skim, get the gist, among others. Finally, they use a strategy they believe will accomplish the goal. When reading skills are highly developed, these processes may occur automatically. While reading, skilled readers check their progress. If their goal is to locate important ideas, and if after reading a few pages they have not located any important ideas, they are apt to reread those pages. If they encounter a word they do not understand, they try to determine its meaning from context or consult a dictionary rather than continue reading. Younger children recognize comprehension failures less often than do older children. Younger children who are good at comprehension may recognize a problem but may not employ a strategy to solve it (e.g., rereading). Older children who are good at comprehension recognize problems and employ correction strategies.

2.3.4. Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Reading strategies can be classified in the following way: planning, monitoring, and evaluating strategies (Israel, 2007; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Planning strategies are those strategies used before reading, to activate students' background knowledge of the topic to be read. Also, they involve previewing from the title, pictures, and subtitles so as to help the reader to have an idea of what the text will be about. Moreover, learners may check whether the material has a certain text structure such as cause and effect, question and answer, compare and contrast, and so on. Finally, setting the purpose for reading can also be classified as a planning strategy (Paris et al., 1991; Pressley, 2002).

Monitoring strategies are those that happen while reading. Examples of these strategies are activities to comprehend vocabulary, exercises that help the learner reflect on what he/she has understood so far, summarizing and inferring the main ideas of each paragraph (Israel, 2007; Pressley, 2002). Other monitoring strategies involve focusing on specific words or information and determining which part of the text can be emphasized or ignored based on the purpose of the task (Hudson, 2007).

Evaluating strategies are used after reading. One example is that learners apply what they have read to other situations, identifying themselves with the author or main character, and also to continue reading and investigating about the topic they have read.

The three groups of metacognitive reading strategies, - planning, monitoring and evaluating – have a variety of strategies that involve readers' metacognitive processing.

2.4. Pre-reading strategies

According to Tierney and Cunningham (1984), pre reading activities function as a way to access the reader's prior knowledge and "provide a bridge between his knowledge and the text" (Tierney and Cunningham 1984:610). The authors break up pre-reading activities in two parts (i) teacher-centered and (ii) student-teacher or peer interaction. Teacher-centered is one-way question/answer activity. Student-centered activities are more apt to develop an independent behavior from the beginning. Zhang (1993) states that "comprehension is facilitated by explicitly introducing schemata through pre-reading activities" (Zhang, 1993:.5). Thus the pre-reading stage helps in activating the relevant schema and motivate students before the actual reading takes place. For example, teachers can ask students questions that arouse their interest while previewing the text. Similarly, Abraham (2002) believes that teachers activate the students' schema" during the pre-reading phase by helping "students recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of a text" (Abraham, 2002: 6), i.e. through discussion of titles, subheadings, photographs, identifying text structure, previewing, etc. In one word, when teachers provide pre-reading activities, they activate background information making connections with what students already know, they elicit prior knowledge related to the main ideas of the text to be read and they also set a purpose for reading.

The main pre-reading activities are the following:

2.4.1. Predicting

Students try to guess and predict what the text will be about by looking at the title and subtitle, by previewing basic vocabulary present in the text, by looking at the pictures, diagrams or graphs that the text might have or by paying attention to the text organization. Making predictions is effective to promoting readers' activation of their background knowledge, which is an important part in the process of reading.

2.4.2. Activating previous knowledge

By creating class discussions about the topic they will read about and asking students what they know about the subject of the text, they are being prepared to comprehend the text easier and they are making connections with what they already know. Reading comprehension questions in advance can also help students to focus on finding specific information while reading.

2.4.3. Mind gap

Students develop a “mind gap” around the title or the main topic of the text, focusing on the vocabulary related to the topic.

2.5. While reading strategies

The aim of while-reading activities is to develop students’ ability in reading texts by developing their linguistic and schematic knowledge. In one word, the aim of the while reading stage is to check comprehension of what it is being read. Teachers guide the process by which readers interact with the text and students can clarify and review what has happened so far and can confirm or create new predictions as they read.

Some examples of while reading strategies are:

2.5.1 Skimming and scanning

When students skim the text, they read it quickly to get an idea of the general content. When they scan the text, they also read it fast, but looking for specific information. Scanning means when we read to find information, we move our eyes quickly across the text. We do not read every word or stop reading when we see a word we do not understand. We look for the information we want to find. Generally, scanning is a technique that is helpful when we are looking for the answer to a known question.

2.5.2. Guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context

Smith (1971) argued that the best way to identify an unfamiliar word in a text was to draw inferences from the rest of the text rather than looking it up in a dictionary. This view differentiates top-down processing from bottom-up processing to deal with unknown words, emphasizing the reader depends on the context to interpret words.

2.5.3. Making Inference

It is the process of creating a *personal* meaning from text. It involves a mental process of combining what is read with relevant prior knowledge (schema). The reader's unique interpretation of text is the product of this blending. Vonk and Noordman (1990) stated that the writer would leave implicit the information that was supposed to be derived from the text by the reader. Therefore, we see that the reader has to draw upon his prior knowledge or his understanding of the context to deduce the implicitly-stated information embedded in the text.

2.5.4. Cognates

Cognates are words in two languages that have similar pronunciation, meaning, and spelling. They can help second-language learners with vocabulary expansion and reading comprehension tasks.

2.6. After reading strategies

After reading strategies provide students a way to summarize, reflect, and question what they have just read. In this stage, students integrate or synthesize the material they have read into their own knowledge base of the topic. Here, teachers provide activities to help students make interpretations and deepen understanding and develop their critical thinking about the given text and also connect it to their own life and experiences.

Examples of after reading strategies are:

2.6.1 Retelling. After reading the text, the students retell what they have read. Sometimes giving them specific questions to guide the answer such as: who, what, when, where, why and how, may help them to focus on the important information of the text they have just read.

2.6.2. Reflection. By reflecting on what was read, students can describe how the new information relates to their previous knowledge and to their own life experiences.

2.6.3. Summarizing. Summarizing the main points of the text is a good way to see if it has been understood and to focus on the most important points of it. An effective way to summarize a text is by using graphic organizers where students reflect on what they read and synthesize their thinking. A variety of organizers can be used based on the format of the text.

Chapter III

3. Reading strategy instruction

3.1. Reading strategy instruction

Since comprehension is an essential characteristic of good readers, it “can be increased significantly when it is taught explicitly” (Paris & Hamilton, 2009:49). This involves making students cognitively aware of the thinking process good readers have as they get involved with the text and providing them with specific strategies they can use to comprehend different types of texts. As Snow (2002) states, “because meaning does not exist in text but must be constructed from the text by the reader, instruction of how to use reading strategies is necessary to improve comprehension” (Snow, 2002: 32).

The fact that a child can decode words and read phrases fluently does not mean that he/she is a proficient reader. The complex process of reading requires the individual to use a variety of skills simultaneously. Many teachers believe that by reading books, books, and more books, a good reader is born (Pressley, 2006). However, researchers like Harris and Pressley (1991) discovered that proficient readers flexibly used a variety of strategies while the not yet proficient readers employed fewer strategies. Moreover, the yet not proficient readers were not particularly effective or efficient in their strategy use.

Expert readers use strategies consciously and unconsciously to enhance their understanding and to monitor comprehension; the strategies used may vary from local actions, such as guessing the meaning of a word in a context, to more global behaviors such as evaluating the text according to the reader’s purpose. Research in first and second language contexts has demonstrated that reading strategies can be taught and that students benefit from such instruction. When strategic reading is integrated into instruction, students progress in their abilities to use strategies while reading, they arrive at a richer understanding of text meaning, and their performance on test of comprehension and recall improves (Carrel, Pharis and Liberato 1989). Also, students can develop a more positive attitude towards reading (Auerbach and Paxton 1997)

It is of vital importance that teachers consider the goals of reading instruction. The fundamental aim is to help students become more like expert readers, but the short term goal is to enable students to make sense of the text that they are reading at the moment (Pressley, 1996). Less successful readers have difficulties in understanding what they are reading and often continue the process of reading with a limited comprehension instead of engaging with the text to deepen their understanding. (Jimenez, Garcia and Pearson, 1995). Therefore, the most important role of the teacher is to enable students to monitor their comprehension and to

become more self-aware readers. The strategies chosen by the teacher can improve this goal. Generally, three strategies may be particularly relevant for enabling students to monitor their own comprehension: (i) asking questions, that students use in order to check their understanding of what they have read, (ii) summarizing, which also checks understanding of the text, and (iii) predicting, which tests students' comprehension as well since successful prediction is related to knowledge of text structure and content.

Even though strategic reading instruction may vary depending on the instructional setting and the students' needs, there are four general principles that can guide teachers who are attempting to integrate strategic reading instruction into their classrooms. The first one is to choose texts carefully. The texts should be challenging but not too frustrating to read. Using texts at an appropriate level of difficulty, with suitable content, is vital for strategy instruction to succeed. The second principle is to plan in advance. Teachers should think about the different behaviors of expert readers, the goals of instruction, students' needs and the demands of the text. The third principle is to adapt while teaching. Strategic reading instruction requires a flexible and responsive attitude on the part of the teacher. Though lesson plans are valuable, the teacher should listen to what the students are saying and watch what they do as they read and discuss the text meaning. The fourth and last principle is to keep track of the strategies that have been covered in class. Strategy instruction needs recycling and revisiting to ensure that students become comfortable with different strategies and use them in different texts. (Pressley, 1996)

Strategic reading instruction takes time, not only for the teacher that needs to prepare the material and to adapt it to students' needs but also for the students in the classroom. However, the reward of using strategic reading instruction may well be equal with the time invested for both the students and the teacher. As a result of instruction and practice, students learn how to read effectively in the process of reading to learn, becoming more autonomous and self-aware readers. Moreover, strategic reading instruction has benefits for teachers as well since it helps to motivate students to participate in classroom activities. Also, it helps teaching students how to learn.

3.2. Procedures for teaching reading strategies

There are five necessary parts of all strategy instruction (Winograd & Hare, 1988 as described by Carrel, Gajdusek & Wise, 1998) related to the three kinds of metacognitive knowledge: declarative, procedural and conditional knowledge. The five elements are:

- (1) describe the strategy by defining it or explaining its features;
- (2) explain why students are learning the strategy and therefore its benefits;

- (3) show how the strategy is used, providing explicit examples;
- (4) describe when and where the strategy should be used; and
- (5) show students how to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy use, and provide additional suggestions to fix strategy problems

In the parts of strategy instruction described above, the first two procedures are related to declarative knowledge, the third element addresses procedural knowledge and the two last steps are associated to conditional knowledge.

In a similar way, Grant (1994) proposed five components of strategy instruction:

- (1) Informed training so that students see the value of strategy use;
- (2) Modelling and scaffolding to inform students about what actually happens during the reading process;
- (3) Self-monitoring and evaluation to encourage students and to help them to transfer strategy knowledge to different texts;
- (4) Practice to gain confidence and independence in using strategies; and
- (5) Transferring the strategies to other contexts.

Winograd and Hare (1988) and Grant (1994) include an explanation of each strategy as well as suggesting where and when to apply it. Also, they focus on awareness-rising and self-monitoring and evaluation. However, in Grant's approach, more attention is given to encouraging students to transfer their strategies to other context. This is why he includes two additional steps in instruction: practice and transference, helping students to gain confidence and independence in using strategies. These procedures for strategy instruction where there is an explanation and modelling of the strategy followed by student practice in the form of group work/discussion, have benefited non-proficient L1 and L2 learners.

According to Winograd and Hare (1988) and Grant (1994), there should be three main steps in strategy instruction: orientation, modelling and application. Each of these steps is concerned with different forms of knowledge (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983). These forms include declarative knowledge (knowing what), procedural knowledge (knowing how) and conditional knowledge (knowing why). Both the steps in the instructional process and the related forms of knowledge are explained next.

3.2.1. Orientation

Winograd and Hare (1988) recommend that before strategy instruction, students should be informed about strategies. This involves both declarative and conditional knowledge (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983). An example of this could be that the teacher informs the

students about effective extensive reading strategies (building declarative knowledge), providing a definition or description of strategies (declarative knowledge) and raising students' awareness of the value of using a strategy and when to use it (conditional knowledge).

3.2.2. Modelling

Here, the students will be given the procedural knowledge to perform various actions (Paris, Lipson, and Wixson, 1983). The teacher demonstrates how to apply strategies by thinking aloud as he/she performs each step in the strategy to encourage students to recognize what actually happens.

3.2.3. Application

In this step, the students have the opportunity to practice the strategies and therefore to gain confidence as well as independence in using them.

Chapter IV

4. Methodology

The aims of this study were to identify the strategies students were currently using when reading in the foreign language English and to determine if reading strategies instruction could be effective in improving reading skills for Argentinian high school students.

4.1. Research questions

To carry out the investigation, the following questions were researched:

- (i) Does unawareness of the use of reading strategies result in a lack of understanding a text in a foreign language?;
- (ii) Is reading strategy instruction useful for students?;
- (iii) Can EFL/ESL learners improve their reading English comprehension using metacognitive reading strategies?

4.2. Participants

The participants were high school students in six classes whose English level varied from beginner to pre-intermediate in CEM 45 and CEM 36 in the city of San Carlos de Bariloche. In the following chart, information about the number of students per class that participated in the study in each school is shown:

	age level	13 years old	14 years old	15 years old	16 years old	17 years old	Total
Control Group CEM 36	1 st year	4	3	2	--	--	9
	2 nd year	--	8	1	4	1	14
	3 rd year	--	--	6	4	2	12
Experimental group CEM 45	1 st year	10	4	--	1	--	15
	2 nd year	--	11	2	2	--	15
	3 rd year	--	--	11	4	1	15
Total n° of students							80

4.3. Research methods

4.3.1. Questionnaire

In order to see if students were already using any reading strategy, they participated by responding to the questionnaire “Cuestionario sobre estrategias de lectura” (See appendix 7.1)

4.3.2. Activities

4.3.2.1. Pre-reading activities

The pre-reading activities chosen focused on the following strategies:

- Predicting
- Activating prior knowledge

4.3.2.2. While reading activities

The while-reading activities selected focused on the following strategies:

- Skimming and scanning
- The use of cognates

4.3.2.3. Post reading activities

The post-reading activities chosen focused on the following strategy:

- Summarizing

Chapter V

5. Analysis of Data.

5.1. Control and experimental group

The study was performed with two groups of students; on the one side, the control group and on the other side the experimental group. The control group did not receive any specific instruction on the reading strategies chosen for this study while the experimental group received specific reading strategy instruction for a period of 4 weeks.

1st 2nd and 3rd year students have been studying English at state schools for 1, 2 or 3 years respectively, except from those students who have repeated a school year. All levels have 120 minutes English lessons per week.

The control group had a total of 35 students: 9 from 1st year, 14 from 2nd year and 12 from 3rd year, aged from 13 to 17.

The experimental group had a total of 45 students: 15 from 1st year, 15 from 2nd year and 15 from 3rd year, aged from 13 to 17.

The total number of students that participated were 80.

5.2. Questionnaire analysis

In order to see if students were aware of the use of reading strategies when reading a text in the foreign language English and if they were already using any, all the participants answered the questionnaire “Cuestionario sobre estrategias de lectura” (see Appendix 7.1). The questionnaire was done in Spanish so as to ensure that students understood the questions and were able to provide genuine responses. The questionnaire contained 28 closed items asking about students’ experiences focusing on reading strategies employed when reading texts in English. The 28 statements were divided into 3 categories: *before* reading a text, *when* reading a text and *after* reading a text. Moreover, the items were classified according to their purpose:

a. Previewing and predicting

- (1) “plan what to do before I start”
- (2) “have a purpose in mind”
- (3) “read the title and sub-titles before reading the rest of the text”
- (4) “focus on the key words” from the title
- (5) “think what I already know about the topic”
- (6) “think about how one sub-title related to another sub-title”

- (7) “look at any pictures / illustrations”
- (8) “think about what information the writer might present”

Items in the second category mention the strategies that students might use while they read a text. The eighteen items, organized by category are:

b. Careful, incremental reading

- (9) “read every sentence slowly and carefully to understand the text”
- (27) “re-read it once or more if I do not understand it”

c. Skimming

- (10) “read the first sentence of each paragraph”
- (11) “read the first paragraph and last paragraph (introduction and conclusion)”
- (16) “skim the text quickly to get the general ideas”

d. Coping with unknown vocabulary

- (12) “guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases”
- (13) “skip unknown words”

e. Applying language knowledge

- (14) “use contextual clues to help me understand the text better”
- (15) “use English grammar to help me understand the text”

f. Scanning

- (17) “scan the text for specific details”

g. Summarizing

- (18) “distinguish between main points and examples”
- (19) “differentiate important from unimportant ideas”
- (20) “distinguish between fact and opinion”
- (21) “understand the relationship between ideas”
- (22) “analyze what the author meant or tried to say”
- (23) “take notes while reading to help me understand what I have read”

(24) “write a summary of the main information of the text ”

(28) “make notes on the main points as I remember them”

h. Translation

(25) “translate the text from English into Spanish”

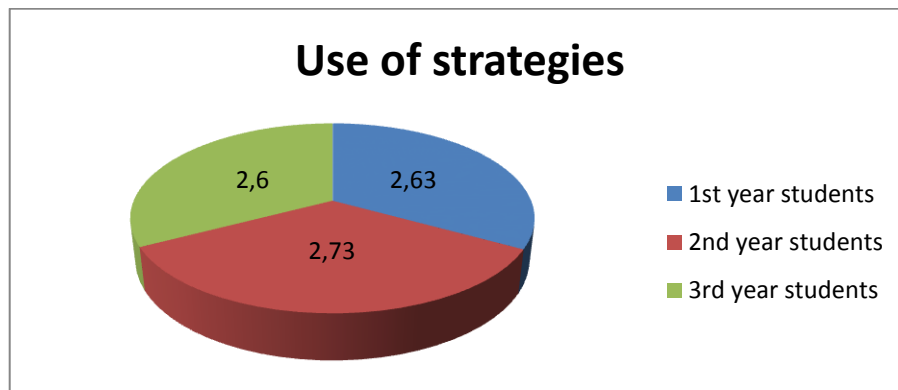
i. Evaluation

(26) “check if my guesses about the text are right or wrong”

5.2.1. Graphics

The following graphics show the results obtained from the questionnaire.

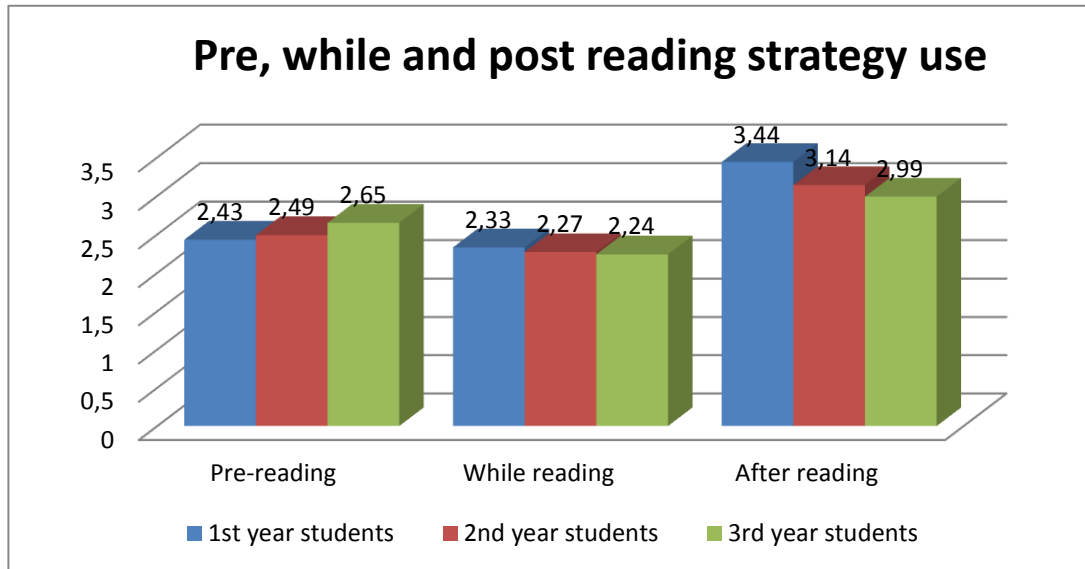
5.2.1.1. Use of strategies in general.



Key to averages: 3,5 or higher = High 2.5-3.4 = Medium 2.4 or lower= Low

Graphic 5.2.1.1. showed that 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students used strategies in a similar frequency. According to the key to calculate the average, all groups of students used a moderate average of strategies (between 2.5% and 3.4%). This means that the majority of the respondents used different strategies to monitor and manage their reading in some way.

5.2.1.2. Pre-reading, while reading and after reading strategy use.

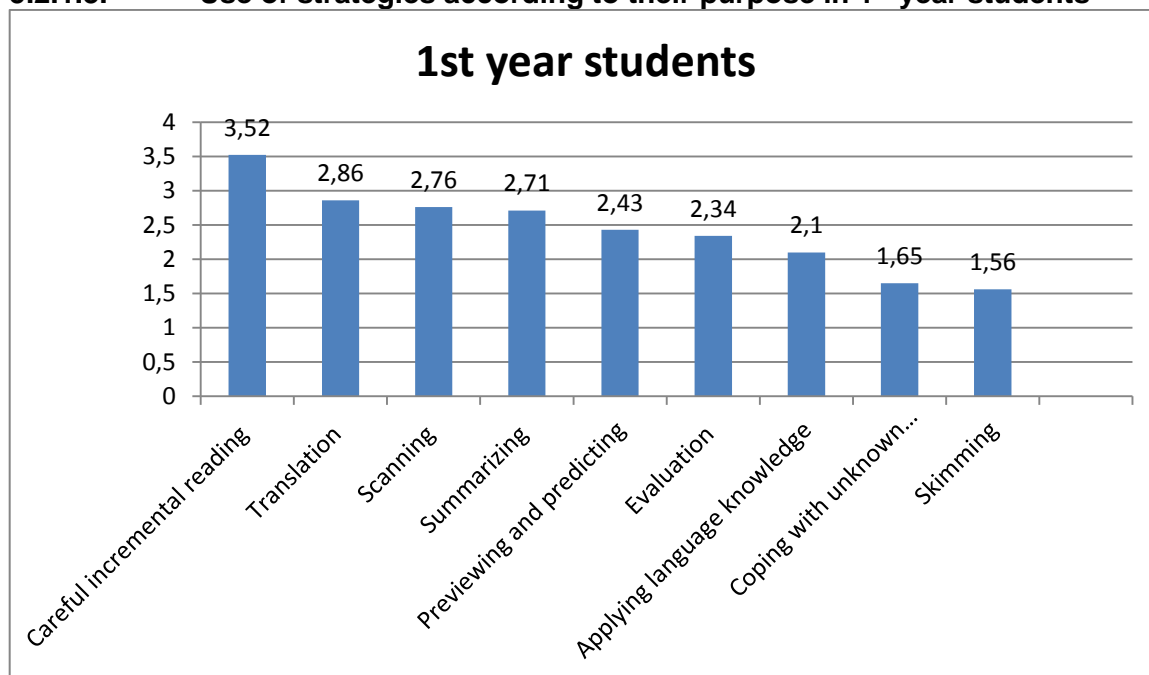


Key to averages: 3,5 or higher = High 2.5-3.4 = Medium 2.4 or lower = Low

Graphic 5.2.1.2. illustrates the following information:

- 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students used more frequently after reading strategies than pre- or while reading strategies;
- the results in 1st year students revealed that after reading strategies are close to high averages (3,44%), while pre- and while reading strategy use was medium. (2,43%; 2,33% respectively);
- answers in 2nd year students revealed that after reading strategies were close to high averages (3,14%), whereas pre reading strategies were in a moderate average (2,49 %) and while reading strategies were low (2,27%).
- Similarly to 2nd year students, 3rd year students results revealed that after reading strategies were used more frequently than the rest, though they were in the middle average (2,99%) like pre reading strategies (2,65%), while reading strategies were in a low level (2,24%);
- 3rd year students used more frequently pre-reading strategies than 1st or 2nd students;
- 3rd year students used less frequently while and post reading strategies than 1st and 2nd year students.
- 1st year students used considerably more frequently after reading strategies than the other levels.

5.2.1.3. Use of strategies according to their purpose in 1st year students

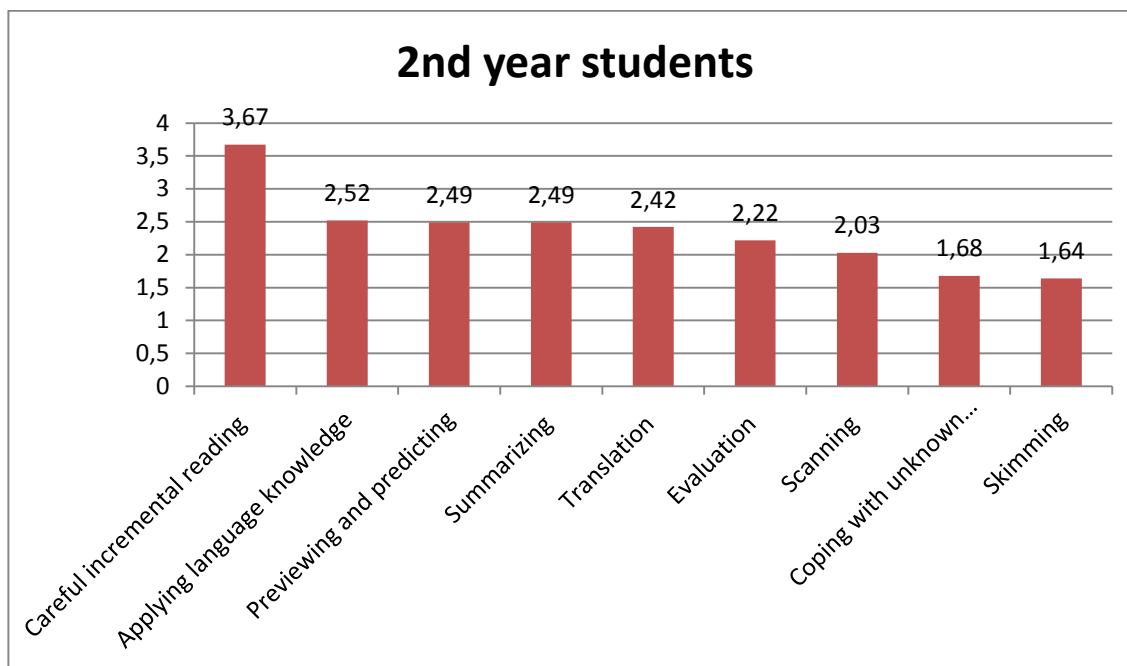


Key to averages: 3,5 or higher = High 2.5-3.4 = Medium 2.4 or lower= Low

This graphic shows that 1st year students used more strategies with the purpose of having a careful and incremental reading (3,52%), by reading every sentence slowly and carefully to understand the text and re-reading it once or more if they do not understand it.

Translating English into Spanish (2,86%), scanning for specific information (2,76%) and summarizing (2,71%), are also strategies chosen more frequently by 1st year students. On the other hand, the strategies less used are skimming the text (1,56%), guessing the meaning or skipping unknown words (1,65%), and using the context and grammar rules to have a better understanding of the text. (2,10%).

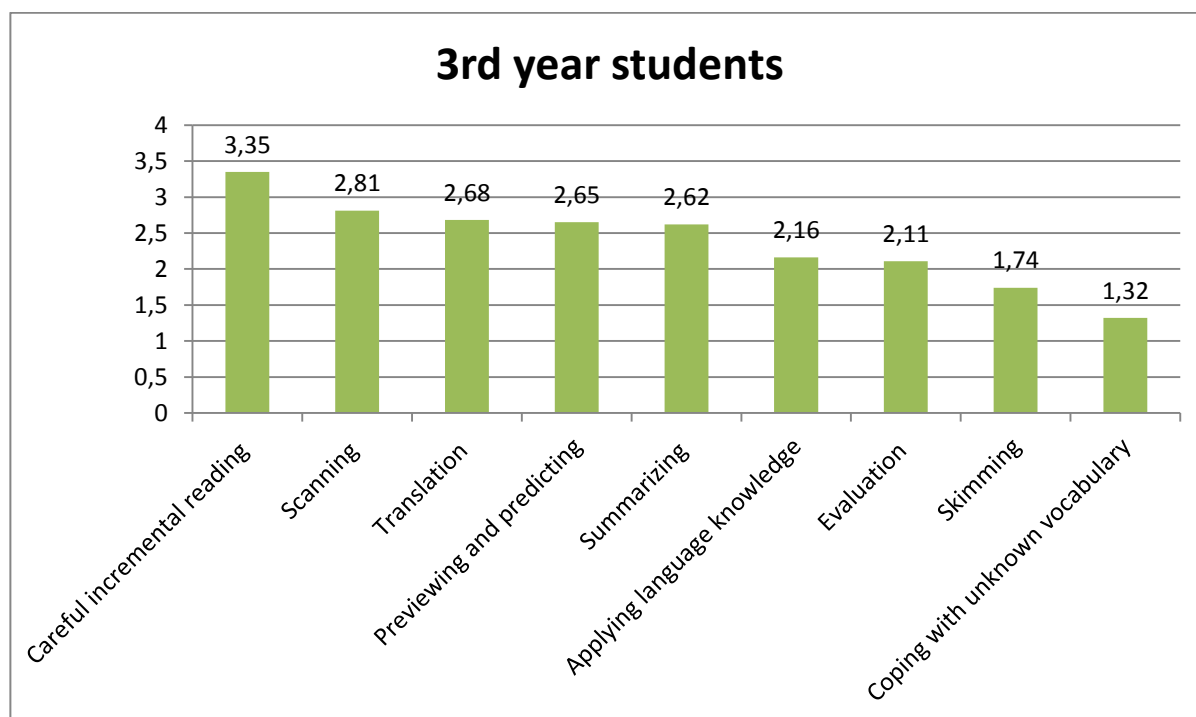
5.2.1.4. Use of strategies according to their purpose in 2nd year students.



Key to averages: 3,5 or higher = High 2.5-3.4 = Medium 2.4 or lower= Low

Graphic 5.2.1.4. illustrates that 2nd year students also reported using strategies for a careful incremental reading with a high frequency (3,67%). In a second place, strategies to apply language knowledge like using the context and the grammar of the language are chosen quite often (2,52%). Similarly, previewing and predicting, summarizing and translating are strategies used moderately (2,49%, 2,49% and 2,42% respectively). The strategies that are not very often used are those related to evaluation (2,22%), coping with unknown vocabulary (1,68%), scanning (2,03%) and skimming. (1,64%)

5.2.1.5. Use of strategies according to their purpose in 3rd year students.



Key to averages: 3,5 or higher = High 2.5-3.4 = Medium 2.4 or lower= Low

In the same way as 1st and 2nd year students, 3rd year scholars reported using strategies related to careful incremental reading very frequently (3,35%). In a second place, scanning, translating, previewing and predicting, and summarizing are strategies chosen quite recurrently. (2,81%, 2,68%, 2,65%, 2,62%, respectively). Strategies occasionally chosen are those related to applying language knowledge (2,16%), evaluation (2,11%) skimming the text (1,74) and those related to coping with new vocabulary (1,32%).

5.3. Activities

5.3.1. Activities done with experimental group

With the intention of answering if reading strategy instruction was useful for students and if they could improve their reading English comprehension using metacognitive reading strategies, the experimental group received specific reading strategy instruction on the strategies described next, for a period of 4 weeks, using several texts to practice the different strategies and a final test where they had to apply what they have learnt. (See Appendix 7.3)

Pre reading strategies:

(1) **Predicting.** Students were taught to use the title and pictures of any given text so as to predict what it was about. Also, they were trained to identify the different types of

texts, such as advertisements, short stories, book reviews, character profiles, and so on. (See Appendix 7.3.1, activity 2 and Appendix 7.3.2, activity 2)

(2) **Activating prior knowledge.** Class discussions about the topic being read were held. This prepared students to comprehend the text in a better way, making connections with their own life experiences and with what they already knew about the subject. (See appendix 7.3.1, activity 1; appendix 7.3.2, activity 1a-b, appendix 7.3.3 activity 1a-b)

While reading strategies:

(1) **Skimming.** Students were given different short texts and practiced to read them quickly ignoring unfamiliar words or phrases so as to get the general ideas presented. The students confirmed or refuted their predictions done when talking about the title and pictures present in the texts or indicated the topics mentioned in them. (See appendix 7.3.1, activity 3; appendix 7.3.3 activity 2a-b). Also, they skimmed each paragraph and discussed the ideas presented on them. (See appendix 7.3.2, activity 3)

(2) **Scanning.** Students were asked to find specific information in the text, teaching them to ignore the unnecessary information, unfamiliar words or phrases. (See appendix 7.3.3 activity 3). Also, students had to find answers to specific questions in the given text. (See appendix 7.3.1, activity 4; appendix 7.3.3 activity 4). Moreover, they were given a multiple choice activity where they had to find the specific answer in the text. (See appendix 7.3.2, activity 4)

(3) **Cognates.** Learners were taught what a cognate was. Several examples were shown in given texts so that students could identify and use them to comprehend the texts in a better and easier way. (See appendix 7.3.2, activity 5; appendix 7.3.3 activity 5) At lower levels, students were given letters of the words taken from the text as a clue (See appendix 7.3.1, activity 5). Moreover, students worked with common “false friends” examples.

After reading strategies

(1) **Summarizing.** Students made a synopsis of the texts by retelling what the text was about using their own words or sequencing given sentences, in the case of first year students. (See appendix 7.3.1, activity 6) Also, students summarized some texts by simply answering the questions: “*what, when, where, how, who*” (See appendix 7.3.2, activity 6), or by drawing a mind map taking the main concepts and words from the texts. (See appendix 7.3.3 activity 6)

5.3.2. Activities done with control group

The control group, on the other hand, did not receive any instruction on the strategies described above. The students in this group did the same final test as the experimental group

described in Appendix 7.3, without any specific previous practice. Basically, pre-reading activities to activate prior knowledge and to familiarize with the topic of the given text were not done. Similarly, skimming activities to get general ideas of the concepts presented in the text were avoided. Each level worked in the way described next:

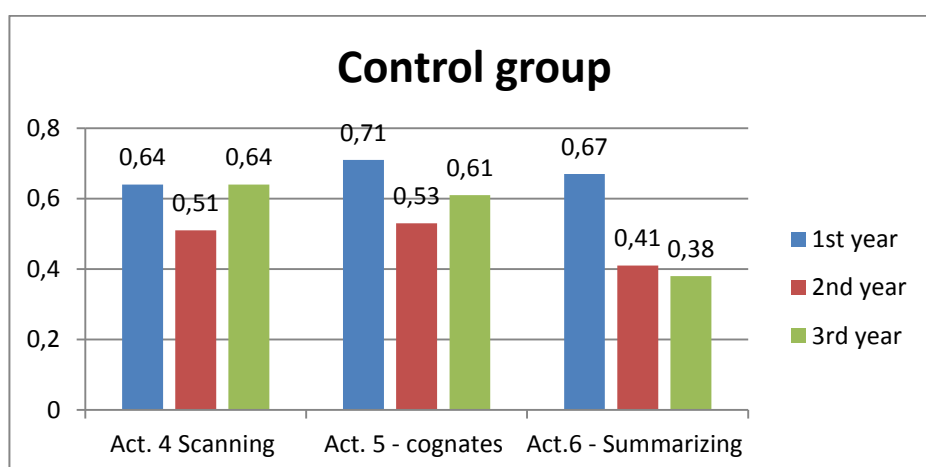
- 1st year students read the text given on their own and answered the questions about it (See Appendix 7.3.1, activities 4 and 6). Activities to predict the topic of the given text or to activate prior knowledge were not done. As regards cognates, the students were asked to complete the given activity (See Appendix 7.3.1, activity 5) with minimal instruction on what a cognate was, and with no previous practice.

- As regards 2nd year students, they were given the test (See Appendix 7.3.2) and were requested to complete the chart about vocabulary (See Appendix 7.3.2, activity 1) but not as a pre-reading activity to activate prior knowledge but as a regular vocabulary exercise. Then, the students had to complete the multiple choice activity about the text given (See Appendix 7.3.2, activity 4), underline cognates and summarize the text completing the chart (See Appendix 7.3.2, activities 5 and 6). Pre-reading or skimming activities were not done.

- In the case of 3rd year students, no pre-reading activities were done (See Appendix 7.3.3., activity 1 a-b). The aim of these activities was to activate prior knowledge on the topic of the text and make connections with their own life experiences. Both skimming activities (See Appendix 7.3.3, activity 2 a-b) were not done. The purpose of these activities was to get general ideas and to familiarize with the vocabulary and ideas presented. The students answered questions about the text (See Appendix 7.3.3., activity 4), identified the cognates (See Appendix 7.3.3., activity 5) and summarize the text by creating small mind maps (See Appendix 7.3.3., activity 6).

5.3.3. Analysis of activities

5.3.3.1. Results in control group



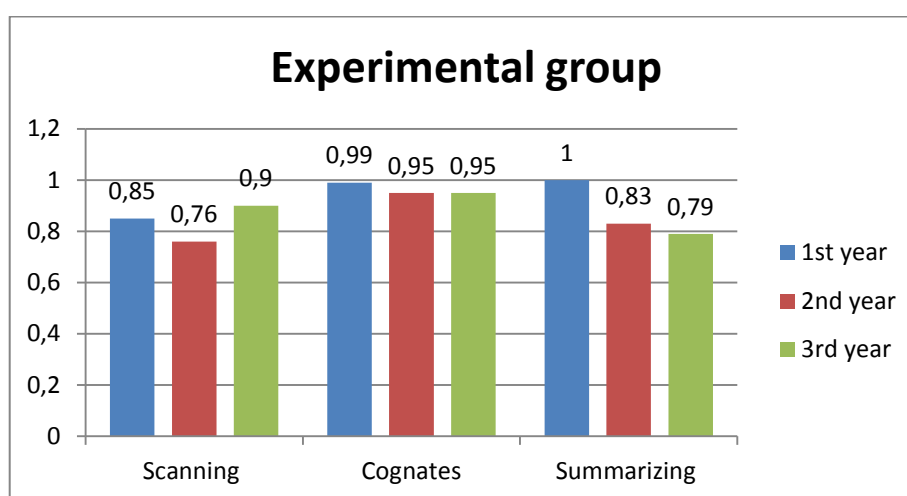
Key to reference: 1 maximum – 0 minimum.

Results in graphic 5.3.3.1. show that 1st and 3rd year students had a better performance when scanning the text than 3rd year students, though the result was 0,64% where 1 is the maximum possible. 2nd year students solved in a 0,51% the exercises related to this strategy.

As regards cognates, it was the strategy with higher results in 1st and 2nd years and with good results in 3rd year. However, many students in the three levels confused a cognate with those words that were familiar to them like: “red”, “face”, “one”, “life”, “dancing”.

Concerning summarizing strategies, 1st year students found it quite easy to identify in which paragraph given information was mentioned, where basically the summary was done for them. (See Appendix 7.3.1.6) However, for 2nd and 3rd year students it was very hard to extract the main ideas from the given texts so as to complete the chart or the mind map. (See Appendix 7.3.2.6 and 7.3.3.6, respectively).

5.3.3.2. Results in experimental group



Key to reference: 1 maximum – 0 minimum.

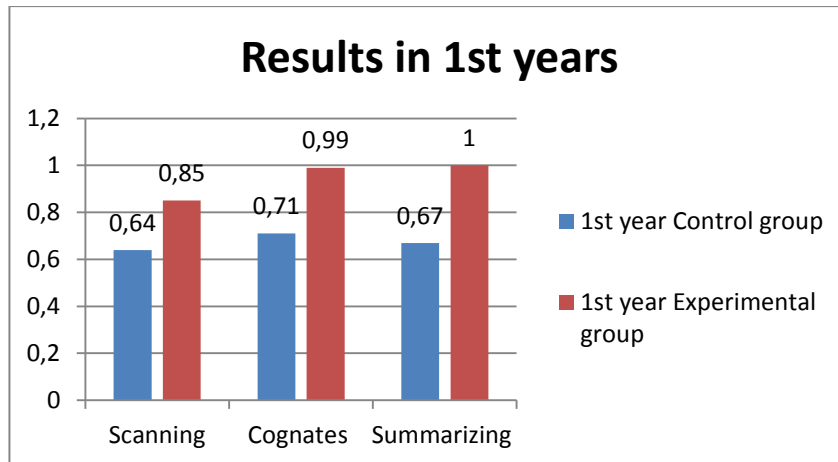
Results in graphic 5.3.3.2 show that 3rd and 1st year students had a very good performance when scanning the text, reaching 0,9% and 0,85% levels respectively. 2nd year students had good results too, reaching a level of 0,76%.

As regards cognates, and similarly to control group results, this was the strategy with higher results. Actually, the three levels had an almost perfect score when recognizing transparent words.

Concerning summarizing strategies, 1st year students got the highest score possible, when identifying in which paragraph given information was mentioned. (See Appendix 7.3.1.6). As regards 2nd year results, results reached 0,83%, where students had to answer the “where, when, why, who, how chart” (See Appendix 7.3.2.6). Results in 3rd year grasped 0,80%, where students created mind maps taking vocabulary and ideas from the text and organize them. Some students created 3 mind maps instead of 5 (one for each country mentioned in the text) (See Appendix 7.3.3.6) and this is why it was considered incomplete.

5.3.3.3. Comparison between control group and experimental group.

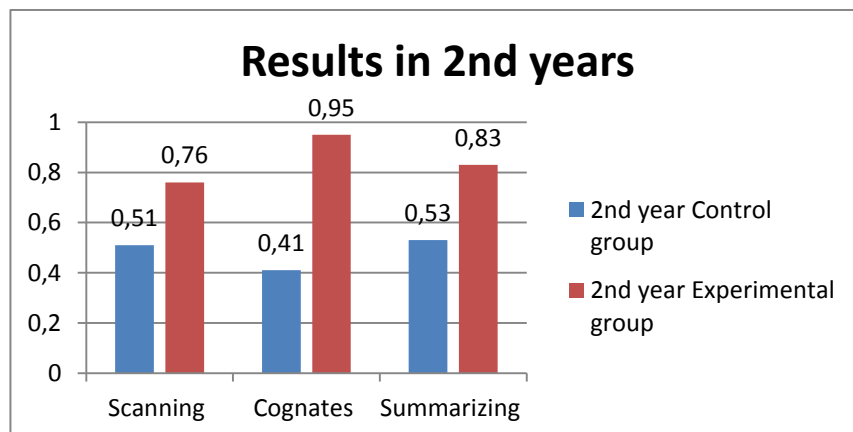
5.3.3.3.1. Results in 1st years



Key to reference: 1 maximum – 0 minimum.

This graphic clearly shows the difference in results between experimental and control group. Experimental group had much better scores in scanning, identification of cognates and summarizing. The results were increased by 21%, 28% and 33% respectively.

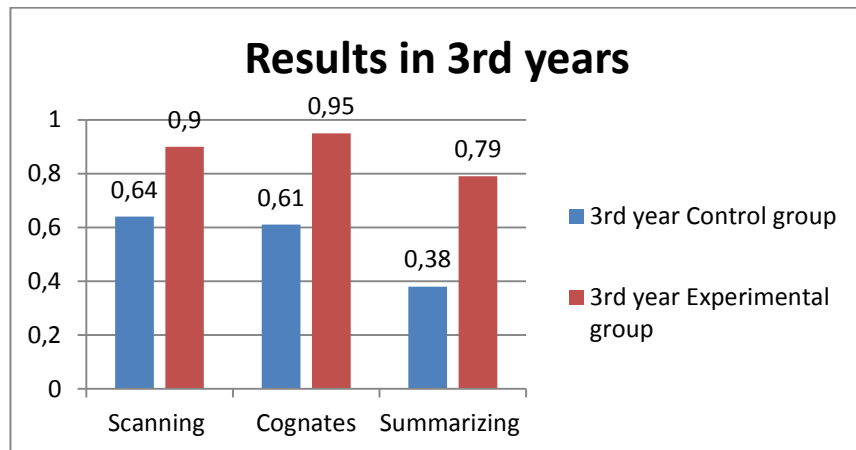
5.3.3.3.2. Results in 2nd years



Key to reference: 1 maximum – 0 minimum.

Similarly to the previous graphic, results in 2nd year experimental group students were substantially higher than those obtained in control group. Experimental group increased scores in scanning, identification of cognates and summarizing by 25%, 54% and 30% respectively.

5.3.3.3.3. Results in 3rd years



Key to reference: 1 maximum – 0 minimum.

Once again, results in 3rd year experimental group students were substantially higher than those obtained in control group. Experimental group increased scores in scanning, identification of cognates and summarizing by 26%, 34% and 41% respectively.

Chapter VI – Conclusions

Final conclusions

This work attempted to answer three questions: (i) Does unawareness of the use of reading strategies result in a lack of understanding a text in a foreign language?; (ii) Is reading strategy instruction useful for students?; (iii) Can EFL/ESL learners improve their reading English comprehension using metacognitive reading strategies? As regards the first question, results obtained from the questionnaire showed that students were already using some strategies when reading texts. However, when the control group did the written exercises and when the experimental group worked in class with different texts, many of them did not have a clear idea of the different strategies presented: predicting, activating prior knowledge, skimming, scanning, use of cognates, summarizing, although results obtained from the questionnaire indicated that they were familiar with them.

Concerning question number two, results showed that after the instruction, most of the participants in the experimental group had learned and used the strategies; differences in final tests results between control and experimental group indicated that those who had received instruction on reading strategies did considerably better than those who had not. This suggests that explicit strategy instruction is effective in building up EFL students' knowledge and encouraging their use of reading strategies. By receiving explicit strategy instruction, students were taught not only what strategies were, but also how, why and when to use them.

The findings obtained from this work also showed clear answers to interrogative number three; teaching reading strategies and using them when reading a text in a foreign language help EFL and ESL students to improve considerably their reading comprehension and knowledge of strategies. The ability to comprehend is one of the main characteristics of a good reader. This is why it is crucial for teachers to support and encourage their students' reading comprehension through explicit strategy instruction, showing them specific strategies they can use to comprehend variety of texts in a better way. With strategy instruction, students were able to develop metacognitive awareness in using reading strategies which changed positively in their attitudes and motivation towards reading in a foreign language. By using the strategies, students gained self-confidence and showed they could interact with different kinds of texts without depending so much on the teacher, a dictionary or translation.

Other results obtained from the activities done in the experimental group during four weeks suggested that although all reading strategies are useful when reading a text in a foreign language, not all of them are equally suitable for all students. Teachers cannot impose the strategy since the interaction between the reader and the text is individual, unique and

original. What teachers can do, however, is to expand the reading strategies the students might already have and in this way they would not be limiting students' potential to learn.

Reading strategy instruction needs time, not only for students to comprehend and internalize first and eventually use the strategies, but also for teachers to prepare the material and adapt instruction to students' needs. Strategies are first explained and discussed and then they are incorporated into real reading tasks. Therefore, reading strategy instruction and learning is a long-term process. However, the rewards of using strategic reading instruction may be equal to the time invested for both the students and the teacher. The result of explicit strategic reading instruction and practice is that students learn how to read effectively, managing their own learning. Students become more autonomous readers and learners, which concludes in being more confident and motivated when reading texts in a foreign language. This is also beneficial for teachers, who are always looking for ways to motivate students, to encourage participation in classroom activities and to go beyond teaching contents.

By teaching students how to read, teachers are training students on how to learn. This idea can be associated to the one the proverb mentioned in the introduction of this work revealed: "*Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him how to fish and he eats for a lifetime*"; after analyzing the results obtained from this work, it can be affirmed that by teaching reading strategies to students, scholars are learning and this is something that will follow them for the rest of their lives.

I - Appendix

7.1 Questionnaire - English version

Name and surname: _____ Age: _____

Course: _____ School name: _____

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT READING STRATEGIES

The purpose of this questionnaire is to collect information about the reading strategies that students use when they read texts in English.

Read each statement and circle the number (0,1,2,3,4,5) which applies to you.

0: Never (0%) 1= rarely (25%) 2= sometimes (50%)
3= Often (75%) 4= usually (90%) 5= always (100%)

Before reading a text, I...							
1.	plan what to do before I start	0	1	2	3	4	5
2.	have a purpose in mind	0	1	2	3	4	5
3.	read the title and sub-titles before reading the rest of the text	0	1	2	3	4	5
4.	focus on the key words" from the title	0	1	2	3	4	5
5.	think what I already know about the topic	0	1	2	3	4	5
6.	think about how one sub-title related to another sub-title	0	1	2	3	4	5
7.	look at any pictures / illustrations	0	1	2	3	4	5
8.	think about what information the writer might present	0	1	2	0	4	5
When I read a text, I...							
9.	read every sentence slowly and carefully to understand the text	0	1	2	3	4	5
10.	read the first sentence of each paragraph	0	1	2	3	4	5
11.	read the first paragraph and last paragraph (introduction and conclusion)	0	1	2	3	4	5
12.	guess the meanings of unknown words or phrases	0	1	2	3	4	5
13.	skip unknown words	0	1	2	3	4	5
14.	use contextual clues to help me understand the text better	0	1	2	3	4	5
15.	use English grammar to help me understand the text	0	1	2	3	4	5
16.	skim the text quickly to get the general ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
17.	scan the text for specific details	0	1	2	3	4	5
18.	distinguish between main points and examples	0	1	2	3	4	5
19.	differentiate important from unimportant ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
20.	distinguish between fact and opinion	0	1	2	3	4	5
21.	understand the relationship between ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
22.	analyze what the author meant or tried to say	0	1	2	3	4	5
23.	take notes while reading to help me understand what I have read	0	1	2	3	4	5
24.	write a summary of the main information of the text	0	1	2	3	4	5
25.	use English grammar to help me understand the text	0	1	2	3	4	5
26.	check if my guesses about the text are right or wrong	0	1	2	3	4	5
<hr/>							
27.	re-read it once or more if I do not understand it	0	1	2	3	4	5
28.	make notes on the main points as I remember them	0	1	2	3	4	5

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7.2. Questionnaire – Spanish version

Nombre y apellido: _____ Edad: _____

Curso: _____ Colegio: _____

CUESTIONARIO SOBRE ESTRATEGIAS DE LECTURA

El propósito de este cuestionario es recolectar información sobre las estrategias de lectura que utilizan los alumnos cuando leen textos en Inglés.

Leé cada oración y circula el número (0,1,2,3,4, ó 5) según tu experiencia.

0: Nunca (0%)

1= rara vez (25%)

2= A veces (50%)

3= Frecuentemente (75%)

4= Usualmente (90%)

5= Siempre (100%)

Antes de leer un texto, yo...							
1.	Planifico qué hacer antes de comenzar.	0	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Tengo un propósito en mente.	0	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Leo el título y el sub título antes de leer el resto del texto.	0	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Me focalizo en las palabras importantes del título.	0	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Pienso en lo que ya se acerca del tema.	0	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Pienso en cómo un sub título se relaciona con otro sub título	0	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Miro las imágenes/fotos	0	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Pienso en la información que el escritor pueda presentar.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Después de leer un texto, yo...							
9.	Leo cada oración despacio y cuidadosamente para entender el texto.	0	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Leo la primera oración de cada párrafo.	0	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Leo el primer párrafo y el último (introducción y conclusión).	0	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Adivino el significado de las palabras o frases desconocidas.	0	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Salteo las palabras desconocidas.	0	1	2	3	4	5
14.	Uso el contexto para ayudarme entender el texto mejor.	0	1	2	3	4	5
15.	Uso la gramática del Inglés para ayudarme entender el texto	0	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Leo el texto rápido para obtener ideas generales.	0	1	2	3	4	5
17.	Escaneo el texto para buscar información específica.	0	1	2	3	4	5
18.	Distingo entre puntos importantes y ejemplos.	0	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Diferencio ideas importantes de no importantes.	0	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Distingo entre un hecho y una opinión.	0	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Entiendo la relación entre ideas.	0	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Analizo lo que el escritor trató decir.	0	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Tomo notas mientras leo para ayudarme entender lo que leí.	0	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Escribo un resumen de lo más importante del texto.	0	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Traduzco el texto del Inglés al Español.	0	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Chequeo si mis predicciones sobre el texto son ciertas o no.	0	1	2	3	4	5
Después de leer un texto, yo...							
27.	Lo releo una vez o más si no lo entiendo.	0	1	2	3	4	5
28.	Tomo notas de lo más importante como las recuerdo.	0	1	2	3	4	5

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7.3. Activities

7.3.1. Activities done with 1st year students –

Pre-reading activities

1. What's important in your life? Number these things in order:

1 = not very important 5 = very important

Friends _____	Sport _____	Music _____	Technology _____	Family _____
---------------	-------------	-------------	------------------	--------------

2. Predicting. Look at the picture in the text and say: What do you think is important in Danny's life? Where was the text published? (a book, a webpage, a newspaper)

The image shows a screenshot of a webpage from 'www.whatsimportant.co.uk'. The page has a navigation bar with 'Home', 'Search', 'My Profile', 'Chat', and 'Help'. The main heading is 'What's important in your life?'. Below it is a profile for 'Username: Danny99'. The text reads: 'Hi. I'm Danny Fletcher and I'm from Manchester, in the UK. This is a photo of me in London, with my friend Rob (and his blue guitar), my friend Carla, her sister Emily, and Brutus, their dog. We're in Carla's house. Carla is the girl in green, Rob's T-shirt is yellow, and I'm the boy with the microphone. These people are very important in my life. Music is very important, too. Rob, Carla, and I are in a band. Our band's name is Purple Days. Brutus's favourite song is 'Saturday'. My mobile phone is important too: all my friends' phone numbers are in it.' To the right of the text is a photo of three people (a boy with a guitar, a girl in green, and a boy with a microphone) and a dog. Below the photo is a 'Send Danny a message' button.

Taken from: "My Life 1", I. Freebairn, Pearson (2012).

While reading activities

3. Skim the text quickly and tick the topics from activity 1 that are mentioned.

4. Scan the text and find the information about the following questions

- Where is Danny from?
- What's the name of Carla's sister?
- What's the dog's name?
- What colour is Rob's T-shirt?
- What is important in Danny's life? Mention 3 things
- What's the name of the band?
- What is the dog's favourite song?

h. Why is Danny's phone important?

5. **Cognates.** Find transparent words in the text using the letter given.

Paragraph 2	P _ _ _ _ G _ _ _ _
Paragraph 3	_ _ C _ _ _ _
Paragraph 4	I _ _ _ _ _ _ U _ _ _ _ _ _ D F _ _ _ _ _
Paragraph 5	_ O _ _ _ _ P _ _ _ _ _ U _ _ _ _

After reading activities

6. Put the ideas in order, as they appear in the text. Write numbers from 1 to

- Danny talks about his phone. (Paragraph number ____)
- Danny says where he is from. (Paragraph number ____)
- Danny mentions his band. (Paragraph number ____)
- Danny talks about his friend with the blue guitar. (Paragraph number ____)
- Danny talks about Carla's house. (Paragraph number ____)

7.3.2. Activities done with 2nd year students –

Dating of the future is now: Shyno T-shirts

by Aditi Simlai Tiwari.

June, 2007. In Italy, special T-shirts are offered to help people who have problems in socializing and going out. The product combines fashion, communication and technology.



The T-shirts are called "Shyno", they cost fifty dollars and were created with the objective of helping shy people to relate. The aim is not that the person stands out because he or she can feel intimidated or nervous and go red in the face; the idea is that the person can meet new people in a modest way.

This is how it works: first, you buy a t-shirt from one of 250 shops that has a nickname and number printed at the back, which together form a code – (Doris 232, for example, Mellow 14 or Fancy 005). Then, the organizers give you a membership card that has a secret password. After that, you can register online at: www.shyno.com. Finally, you see the girl or boy of your dreams wearing one in the disco or pub, on the beach, or on the street. You write down the code and send an admiring text or video message to the website, which passes it on to him or her, with your details and your own mobile phone number. The object of your desire can then respond, or not.

The Shyno service is the invention of Simone Giancola, 28, a medical student frustrated by his inability to contact a beautiful woman he saw on a boat. "I saw this beautiful girl on a sailing boat, the most beautiful girl I'd ever seen in my life. The boat had a number, and I thought, 'If only the number of that boat was a telephone number'. Then it came to me."



What began as an experiment in a nightclub has grown and in a year since its origin, more than 20,000 T-shirts have been sold. Mr Giancola expects to have 200,000 customers by the end of this year and a million within three years.

Shyno plans to extend the service to include car number plates

Adapted from: http://inventorspot.com/articles/dating_difference_shyno_tshirts_20123

Pre-reading activities:

1. Vocabulary - Adjectives to describe personality

A. Classify the following adjectives to describe the personality of a person under each column. In your opinion: are these characteristics positive, negative or depend on the situation?

<i>Extroverted – modest – aggressive – forgetful – shy – honest – optimist – pessimist – realistic – confident – coward – selfish -</i>		
POSITIVE	NEGATIVE	IT DEPENDS ON THE SITUATION

b. Oral discussion. Different opinions are shared and discussed having the following ideas as a guide, so as to activate prior knowledge and experiences about the topic given:

- Think about situations where people are aggressive, shy, selfish, etc. How do these characteristics make you feel?
- What can we do to change or help people with the characteristics you wrote under "negative" and "it depends on the situation?"

2. **Predict** what the text is going to be about by reading the title. Questions like: "How do you think these T-shirts work?", "Do you think they have any picture, letters, numbers?" "What colour do you think they are?" "What colour do you think they shouldn't be? Why?" are done and the ideas are written on the board.

While Reading activities

3. **Skimming the text:** skim the first paragraph and discuss what it is about; do the same with the following paragraphs.

4. **Scanning the text:** individually, scan the text so as to find the following specific information:

(1) **The T-shirt costs:**

- a. 5 dollars
- b. 15 dollars
- c. Fifty dollars

(2) **The objective of the experiments is to:**

- a. Feel intimidated or nervous
- b. Meet new people in a modest way
- c. Get red in the face

(3) **The meaning of “stand out” is:**

- a. To be noticeable
- b. To be discreet

(4) **The T-shirt has:**

- a. A nickname
- b. A nickname and a number
- c. A number

(5) **How does it work? Choose the right order**

- a. You buy the T-shirt, get a password, register online, send a message to your girl or boy of your dreams.
- b. You buy the T-shirt, register online, get a password, send a message to your girl or boy of your dreams.
- c. You register online, get a password, buy the T-shirt, send a message to your girl or boy of your dreams.

(6) **Who invented the T-shirts?**

- a. A doctor
- b. A medical student
- c. A beautiful woman

(7) **How many T-shirts have been sold?**

- a. 20.000
- b. 200.000
- c. A million

5. Use of cognates

The underlined words in paragraph one are transparent words or cognates. Find other examples of them in the rest of the paragraphs and underline them.

After reading activities

6. **Summarizing.** Complete the chart by answering the questions.

Dating of the future is now: Shyno T-shirts				
Where?	When?	Why?	Who?	How?

7.3.3. Activities done with 3rd year students

How do teenagers spend their free time?

Lots of teenagers in the UK spend their free time chatting online to their friends and playing computer games. They also do a lot of sports. Boys play football and tennis and girls play hockey and netball. Some teenagers have hobbies like stamp or coin collecting. Others go to ballet dancing classes or they join the Scout Association.

Teenagers in Canada do a lot of outdoor activities in their free time. They like canoeing and climbing mountains. Ice hockey and horse-riding are popular too. Teenagers also spend free time chatting online and sometimes they just go for a walk with their friends.

In Australia, teenagers like having parties and going to the beach. They also like outdoor sports like surfing, swimming and cycling. Australians like staying at home too. They watch TV and they chat online to their friends. When the weather is good, they like having picnics and barbecues.

Teenagers in Cameroon haven't got much free time because after school they have to work. They help at home or they work in the fields. Some schools have after-school clubs where young people can join theatre groups or have dancing or singing classes. Lots of teenagers sing in choirs. They also like going for walks.

Teenagers in Japan don't get much free time because they often have extra classes after school. But at the weekend, they love using the Internet and they like reading Manga comics and watching cartoons. Teenage girls love talking about fashion and make-up. Boys usually do a martial art like Kendo or judo.

Taken from: Stepping Up2

Pre-reading activities

1. **How do teenagers spend their free time?**
 - a. Match the pictures with the verbs given. There is one extra verb.
 - b. Look at the pictures and say: In your free time, which of the following activities do you...?

(1) Do every day? (2) sometimes do? (3) never do?

PLAY AN INSTRUMENT – GO SHOPPING – MEET FRIENDS – SLEEP – PLAY FOOTBALL – USE THE COMPUTER – READ -



While reading activities

2. **a. Skim** the text and say which of these countries is **not** mentioned
THE UK – CANADA – JAPAN – AUSTRALIA – KENYA – CAMEROON

b- Skim the text again and in no more than two minutes write down as many free time activities mentioned in the text.

Chatting online

3. **Scan** the text and write the free time activities in the correct column.

The UK	Canada	Japan	Australia	Cameroon
<i>Chatting online</i>				

4. **Answer the questions.**

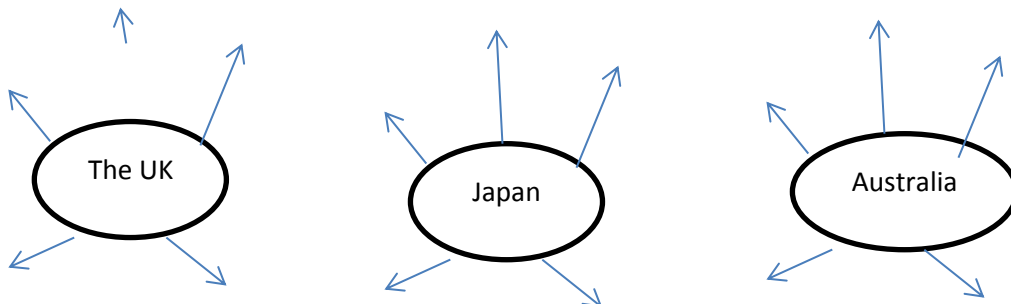
- a. In which country do boys and girls do different sports?
- b. In which two countries do teenagers enjoy going for a walk?
- c. Which two martial arts are mentioned?
- d. In which country do teenagers enjoy activities related to eating?
- e. In which countries do teenagers do activities that involve a computer or the internet?

5. **Cognates.** Can you find 10 transparent words in the text? Circle them

After reading activities

6. **Summarizing the text.**

Create a **mind map** that contains the main activities done by teenagers in each country. You can use the following idea to start:



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