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Importance of reading skills for EFL learners in a private high school in second year of Bachelor in Loja city: A case study.

TRABAJO DE TITULACIÓN

AUTORA: Mosquera Riofrio María Soledad.

DIRECTORA: Ulehlova Eva, Mgs.

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DEDICATION

First of all I would like to dedicate my achievement to God. He has been one of the most important parts in my life. He gives me serenity, peace and love in my dark moments. Then, I would like to say thanks to my two wonderful mothers Sonia and Susana. They are my entire life; they gave me everything that I needed. I could not be anything without them. But above all thank them for letting me be, and always love me. I want to say thanks to my grandmother Juanita, she has been my muse, inspiration, support and the most beautiful angel. Daddy, thank you for all your love and confidence, for being my unconditional friend. Thanks to my uncles, brothers and cousins, you are the sweetest people in my life, you have been always by side, loving me. Also to Viny Blue, he has been my soul mate, thank you for giving me the support, love and patience. You are my everything. And of course to my sweet angels Matheo, Renata and Mathias, you have shown me the true meaning of love. Finally to all my friends, you have been the family that I chose. Thank you for believe in me.

Love, Sole.

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ABSTRACT

This research work is focused on explaining the importance of reading skills for EFL learners, by means of identifying teachers' reading strategies applied in English classroom, and determining the effectiveness of reading comprehension activities on EFL students' motivation for EFL learning.

In this context, this research was carried out in Loja city, and it was a non-experimental study, which was developed under a mixed-method approach. One hundred students of second year of baccalaureate and two English teachers participated in this study. In order to gather empirical information, questionnaires and observation sheets were applied.

Findings mainly show that both teachers and students are aware of the importance of reading to enrich especially the vocabulary background while learning English. However, vocabulary is also the principal challenge students face when performing reading comprehension activities, so it is literally provided by the teachers as pre reading strategy or after students' question on meaning; students weakly identify or cope with it in reading contexts.

KEY WORDS: Reading Skill, Importance of reading, Reading Strategies, Reading Comprehension problems, Motivation.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación inquiriere la importancia de las habilidades de lectura para los estudiantes de EFL, tras la identificación de estrategias de lectura aplicadas en el aula de inglés y la efectividad de las actividades de comprensión lectora en la motivación por el aprendizaje de los estudiantes de EFL.

Esta investigación se llevó a cabo en la ciudad de Loja, y fue un estudio no experimental, que se desarrolló bajo un enfoque de método mixto. Cien estudiantes de segundo año de bachillerato y dos maestros participaron en este estudio. Para recopilar información, se aplicaron cuestionarios y guías de observación.

Los resultados muestran principalmente que tanto docentes como estudiantes son conscientes de la importancia de la lectura para enriquecer especialmente conocimiento del vocabulario en el aprendizaje del inglés. Sin embargo, el vocabulario es también el principal desafío al que se enfrentan cuando realizan actividades de comprensión lectora, por lo que los profesores lo proporcionan literalmente como estrategia de lectura previa o después de la pregunta de los alumnos sobre el significado; los estudiantes lo identifican débilmente en contextos de lectura.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Habilidad de Lectura, Importancia de la lectura, Estrategias de lectura, Problemas de Comprensión Lectora y Motivación.

INTRODUCTION

Communication happens at any level when two or more people meet, and are conscious that people need to stay updated about everything around them, infer that people constantly look for information through social media, friends, newspapers, books, and magazines is a common sense. For that reason, acquiring the necessary skills to understand written language is a must do in the life of every human being.

Developing reading skills open many doors to people, also by reading in any language individuals' memory store the right order of letters, the correct sentence structures, the way people transmit their thoughts and it is possible to define if the text tries to convince, to persuade, to criticize, to apology; even the reader could determine if the writer's feelings were about fear, anger, happiness, sadness, love or merely free ideas that each person interprets by him/herself. Thus, school must always strengthen the reading habit by proposing to learners different activities to work with reading, in order to respond to all their expectations and to the different styles of students' learning (Snow, 2002).

In this context, this research work arises from the need to clear up what challenges EFL students face when reading texts to comprehend them, and what reading strategies teachers have been incorporating to promote an effective reading comprehension. And, in order to answer these enquiries, the main objective is directed to characterize the importance of reading skills for EFL learners, by means of diagnosing the teachers' reading strategies applied in English classroom and determining their effectiveness on students' motivation for EFL learning.

Some research studies confirm that reading is an essential skill in the acquisition of a foreign language, to prove that, different researchers have investigated the topic. Thus, Lopera (2011) conducted a study to report the effects of instruction based on reading strategies in English as a foreign language. As a research method it was used the case study, and three instruments were applied to collect information: tests of reading comprehension, self-reflection in class at the strategy instruction phase, and a learning perception questionnaire. After students improved their reading comprehension, it was mainly concluded that instruction based on reading strategies is beneficial to develop students' self-confidence, and motivation toward English learning; furthermore, they feel confident to avoid the use of the dictionary.

Rodriguez and Rodriguez (2011), conducted another study which was aimed to identify the reading strategies used by bilingual students in the high school. With the study results, they classified the reading strategies into introductory strategies, organizational strategies, elaboration strategies, and monitoring strategies. So, they concluded that the key to

succeed in reading comprehension is to know when and how to apply the cognitive, metacognitive and socio affective strategies.

According to Ariong (2013, p. 19), “teaching reading comprehension typically requires a variety of instructional approaches in order to make children’s educational experiences more productive”. With this study he expected to explore how teachers teach reading comprehension in primary school by analyzing three inclusive classrooms. The main finding of this study was that the teachers’ knowledge base for teaching reading comprehension has been associated in superficial way and without the guidance of a coherent theoretical framework. Secondly, his analysis of classroom data suggested significant variability regarding what counts as reading comprehension instruction, this variability can in part be attributed to the ways in which reading comprehension instruction has been characterized in policy, assessment and resources that are available to teachers. Thus, it is demonstrated the implication of teachers’ professional development about reading comprehension on students’ reading success.

Finally, in general terms, this report is organized into four chapters; the first one describes the Theoretical Framework. The second one presents the methodology applied to carry out this research. The third chapter refers to the analysis and interpretation of the data collected in the field work; and the last one sets the conclusions and its respective recommendations. Hence, characterizing of reading strategies used by both teachers and students at English teaching - learning process through this research, will help students, teachers, educational institutions and even authorities to get some new ideas, in order to address students’ needs on reading techniques, teachers’ training, equipment and policies development that will change current English teaching practices, so that students will be prepared to deal with today’s world challenges.

CHAPTER I: LITERATURE REVIEW.

This section aims at providing an overview about what reading skill is, what implications arise when including reading in the classroom: micro and macro skills, and what its role might be at learning English as a foreign language. Furthermore, the cognitive processes involved in reading comprehension are explained. This last one will be discussed by looking at the two types of reading: intensive and extensive reading. Additionally, it has also been analyzed the importance of motivation at reading process, as well as, problems and difficulties students face when reading, focusing on teachers' and students' point of view about reading process.

Reading Skill

Alderson, Haapakangas, Huhta, Nieminen and Ullakonoja (2014) state that reading is a complex act that involves getting the meaning from the letters which are seen, and identifying the words and the sounds associated to them, in order to understand the text's meaning. They also state that according to the language, the meaning of reading will be linking grapheme to morpheme like in alphabetic languages or the link between written symbols and what we hear when those symbols are pronounced like in the transparent orthographies. Forthwith, reading is converting printed words in verbal sounds; a good reader is the one who is able to dissertate a text with adequate diction and intensity (Resnick and Weaver, 2013). Tennent (2014), also states that reading is the connection between word's recognition and the skill to comprehend these words; simply, reading means to manage linguistic comprehension and word recognition, both important parts of the reading process. That means, reading is a mental process, in which the person who reads, must concentrate on what the text is saying, at the same time he/she explores, questions and maintains a critical attitude towards it. The challenge is to face it and win the battle of understanding, to get the joy of expressing that reader has understood, grasped its thesis and the messages that the text wants to communicate. It is impossible to achieve this end without first developing the ability to read. Without it, there is, naturally, no reader; without a reader, it is not possible for communication to be carried out through the written text, which, at present, has almost reached parity with oral communication.

Additionally, MacPhee (2015), asserts that reading with confidence is necessary to domain five elementary reading competences: first the competence to maneuver spoken sounds that comes from different words and to deduce that speech sequences are made of spoken word; second the competence to be conscious that there is an alliance between each sound and each letter, third the competence to reproduce the sound of the words

properly and coherently like voiced understandable language, fourth possessing powerful jargon that enable the reader to develop the rest of their reading skills, and fifth the competence to understand what a person reads by relating his/her prior knowledge with the new information he or she acquires while reading a text. Rao (2009), suggests the reader must develop some micro-skills like: decipher the script, recognize vocabulary, pick out key words, figure out the meaning of the words, recognize grammatical word classes, detect sentence constituents, recognize basic syntactic patterns, reconstruct and infer situations, goals and participants.

Brown (2010) also proposes that some micro skills must be learned by readers, those skills are: to differentiate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English, keep chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory, process writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose, recognize a core of words and interpret word order patterns and their significance, identify grammatical word classes, notice that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms, identify cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

Additionally to micro skills, Brown (2010) indicates some macro skills to determine if a reader is proficient or not in reading, those macro skills are: to identify the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose, from described events, ideas, etc., infer links and connections between supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification, differentiate between literal and implied meanings, discover culturally specific references and decipher them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata, cultivate and apply a group of reading strategies.

Importance of Reading in EFL

Reading in a foreign language in the current world means intercommunication at any level and stays as a powerful tool to access knowledge from different printed or electronic sources, also reading increases the knowledge of the person (Bryan and Hu, 2013). Gunderson, Murphy and D'Silva (2013) indicate that EFL is taught in a place where the students after class have access to spoken English language in their environment and community, but EFL language is taught in places where after school students are surrounded by languages different from English. This situation creates difficulties to teachers because offering an English environment becomes a difficult task. To talk about reading importance it is necessary to be concerned about the reasons why people should read. Bop Consulting (2016) reports that a reader is engaged in reading activities with different personal outcomes; for example, some adults' reading goals are entertainment, pleasure, to escape from something, understand other cultures, and

develop empathy; similarly, kids and teenagers reading reasons are diversion, learn about themselves and everybody around them, run through group communication, expand their understanding of the world, develop mental agility, concentration and ideas production, also to control their temper; as a result, reading develops communicative skill. Specifically, when talking about the importance of reading at learning a new language, it is impossible to notice that reading really helps to:

Vocabulary development

Hoffman, Afflerbach, Duffy-Hester and McCarthy (2014), assert that vocabulary is the best tool to determine the percentage of reading comprehension in any person, observed on the amount of words the reader is able to identify, and the amount of word's meaning the reader is able to comprehend; vocabulary expansion happens at various stages as the learner uses other skills like reading, writing and speaking, not only at the moment of getting the meaning of new words, but also when the meaning of known words grow and enlarge.

Hence, Chall (1983), as cited by Birch (2014), describes the stages in vocabulary acquisition while evolving a reading process, as follow: In stage 0 people are able to draw their names and differentiate the alphabet letters, readers observe pictures that help them to remember words and guess what happen in a story. In stage 1, learners start decoding and recoding the figures in the sheets and relate those figures with sounds, syllables and words, this process goes unnoticed by the reader. In stage 2, the reader has improved his/her ability to recode and decode the text, also the reader is able to infer what is the situation within the text like/about and understands better the text he or she is reading. In stage 3, the reader can mix reading with other skills like using his/her hands, watching around; in addition to this skill mix, the reader is able to read with the objective of learning about the topic he/she is reading and learning how to scan for specific information. In stage 4, the reader treats topics in textbooks in superior complexity and from more than one standpoint. In stage 5, the reader develops the reading skill fully and is able to deal with specialized text, also the ability to criticize, synthesize, analyze and interpret meanings increases.

Reading and general language competence

The benefits of reading extends beyond just reading. Reading competence has a great effect to the other language skills like writing, speaking and even syntax control. Firstly, there is a well-established link between reading and writing. Basically, the more we read, the better we write. According to Hoey (2005), when people increase their language knowledge by reading, their learning skill enables them to produce more writing or speech. In this way, reading transcends to oral language because it strengths the

competence to exercise spoken sounds. Additionally, as everybody knows, vocabulary is not learned by a single experience. That is when reading allows learners multiple encounters with words and phrases in context; thus, making possible the exemplification of how language works in real situations.

Reading and developing thinking skills

The development of reading competence is a key factor to good learning in all areas of knowledge, both at school and outside of it. The practice of reading develops the capacity for observation, attention, concentration, analysis and critical spirit, in addition, generating reflection and dialogue. Through reading one can have fun, reflect, stimulate and satisfy curiosity about the topics of interest. In simple words, reading promotes thinking basic skills.

Clearly, there is no stimulating academic activity as rich as reading, because it not only promotes thinking skills but stimulates them by enhancing readers in a variety of practical printed resources that encourage students to look for any kind of solution. The range of thinking skills promoted by reading involves information processing, enquiry, reasoning, creative thinking and evaluation skill (Hollingbery, 2015).

Types of Reading

It is important for teachers to identify types of reading, so they know them and learn to choose the most appropriate one for each situation and activity that they want to develop in the classroom.

Thus, extensive reading (ER) is often defined as the approach to teaching and learning to read in a second language or foreign language in which students read a large number of texts in the target language that are within their linguistic competences (Record and Stoller, 2002). It is an approach in which students are encouraged to read many books in the target language without the pressure of being evaluated at the end of reading. The author also highlights the fact that students must choose what they will read according to their own interests and preferences and not read texts imposed by the teacher according to curricular criteria. In short, Stoller (1995, p. 136) considers that "the key aspects in the ER are the quantity and variety, rather than the quality" of the texts. It is considered that ER is best defined based on 10 fundamental principles: reading material readability, availability of a wide variety of reading material, freedom for learners to select what to read, the non-imposition of limits or goals, orientation towards meaning, the non-imposition of activities or evaluations, emphasis on reading speed, individuality, student independence, teacher modeling.

It should be noted that, although many authors emphasize that trainees should not be subjected to the pressure of having to answer questions or undergo evaluations at the

time of reading, it does not imply that students do not concentrate on any activity more than reading. The authors in ER suggest different activities that students should perform each time they read, but all agree that these activities or tasks should not have closed comprehension questions such as those used in exams, but rather non-intrusive tasks that are consistent in the orientation toward the general understanding that predominates in the approach (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

In short, the ER proposes that EFL learners (or any other language) should read a large number of texts, from a wide variety of topics, that they find interesting and / or entertaining. In addition, trainees should read by meaning and general understanding without being asked closed questions about the text or grammatical structures present in it or without being examined about their understanding. Finally, the teacher does not dictate a reading master class, but reads to students or silently reads with them, while providing help and guidance to students at the time they read or help them select what to read, based on their preferences. This approach contrasts with the so-called intensive reading (IR), which is the predominant center in the teaching of reading in EFL. Intensive reading aims to capture a large number of data and relate them in large units of meaning, in order to acquire knowledge. This type of reading is done with the purpose of developing the abilities related to reading comprehension. An intensive reading allows the reader to learn to control his/her own learning. The student learns to analyze words, phrases and sentences to achieve maximum understanding, to pay attention to both the meaning and the form of the language and to solve their doubts through the textbook, a dictionary or questions to the teacher or colleagues (Ruiz, 2012).

The same author mentions that some of the fundamental principles of intensive reading are overall vision and purpose. Overall vision, which can be achieved through several reading strategies such as skimming (point to the overall idea of the text); the use of the information derived from the title; the reading of the first lines of the text; the observation of illustrations, subtitles, footnotes. This vision contributes to a better subsequent organization of textual information. Purpose, where the reading subject predetermines the goal he/she wants to achieve with the reading, focusing in this way on his/her mental structures towards the achievement of that end.

Additionally, Ruiz (2012) mentioned that to read intensively, the readers should consider what information he/she needs, what level of detail is needed with respect to the information, where the emphasis is placed (on ideas, sequences, concrete facts); how long the information must be hold (until the evaluation, over a longer period, all of life); how information is used (to think, to write a report, to take an exam), the questions (they have to follow the same order as the information in the text), the

reading (it is a line-by-line reading guided by the objective and the questions that must be answered), the summary (through the summary, the reorganization of the main ideas and that of the secondary ideas is pursued (it is proposed to go paragraph by paragraph not to forget any of the essential points), the evaluation (this is a self-assessment of the information retained during the intensive reading process; and the understanding. Based on the criteria presented by Angelina Roméu Escobar (cited by Ruiz, 2012) there are three fundamental levels within the understanding, first, level of translation or intelligent reading, which allows information to be obtained by decoding the meanings literally or explicitly, intentionally or implicitly and complementary; second, level of interpretation that allows to evaluate the information product of a critical reading, in which the reader thinks, evaluates; and third level, which allows extrapolation, the creative reading in which it is applied, the validity is discovered, exemplified, and created.

Reading Comprehension

Snow (2002, p. 11) defines, “reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. We use the words extracting and constructing to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension. Comprehension entails three elements: The reader who is doing the comprehending, the text that is to be comprehended, and the activity in which comprehension is a part”.

Surely, everyone recognizes that reading is an activity that lies within a communicative process. Someone who tries to tell something about something or someone has a specific purpose. Therefore, on the interaction between the characteristics of the text and the reader's activity, when facing reading, he/she does not do it from a vacuum, but takes into account different knowledge, purposes and expectations. For instance, different cognitive processes that involve from recognizing the graphic patterns to imagine the situation, make reading a complex activity, which could be deal successfully, if learners are aware of the process involve into some cognitive and metacognitive strategies.

For one thing, reading cognitive strategies are defined by González and Tourón (cited by Valle, González and others, 1992) as a set of particular characteristics that are used for the understanding, learning and reading, and then to remember what has been read, with the guide of learning goals. It should be noted that reading is seen as a process and by using the different strategies, one by one in a systematic way, students come to the true understanding of the text.

With this in mind, the cognitive strategies are the procedures understood as the mental activities that allow to integrate the new information with the previous knowledge, contributing the construction of a significant learning. Goodman (1996), proposes cognitive strategies, which, after the recognition of the decoding suggested by Vega, guide the process, that leads the reader to a good reading, strengthening and understanding.

These are recognition initiation or task, sampling or selection also called underlining, inference, prediction, confirmation, correction and ending; regarding this strategy Goodman (1996) invites to finish the reading at the most appropriate time. It means the reader must determine it, since it can occur through fatigue or for some mishap.

On the other hand, reading metacognitive strategies help to achieve reading goals, if they are used in a conscious and autonomous way, the meaning of the text will be obtained more effectively taking it to long-term memory, so the learner would use it when it is required.

Flavell (1976) states that metacognition refers to the knowledge a person has about his/her own cognitive processes and products, or any other matter related to them, such as perception, attention, memorization, reading, writing, comprehension, communication: what they are, how they are done, when to use one or the other, what factors help or interfere its operability. Similarly, it leads the readers to review their own process, retaking the reading if necessary, to achieve the proposed objective. It is important to highlight that metacognition in reading comprehension, is the recognition and use of mental operations at the time of reading, for the attainment of a goal; for this reason, they help to consciously retain and evoke and self-regulated information. They are, among others, the summary, the conceptual map and the review. These post-reading metacognitive activities comprises phases are important for the teaching reading strategies and, at the same time nourish the idea of an active reader that comes to the construction of the meaning of the text in an autonomous way, where the reader becomes a competent person in reading.

Solé (1998), proposes that before reading it is necessary to plan the goals and means for reading. Activating the previous concept, determining the structure of the text by exploring the material, starting with titles, subtitles and graphics; they are considered precipitating ideas about the text. Instead, during the reading the author suggests to keep supervision and monitoring of the different strategies; verify predictions by checking that the meaning is correct; delimit the text to make the summary up to a certain point; look up the key vocabulary and the unknown; make inferences about concepts and

meanings; make a rereading in case comprehension problems arise; reevaluate if the strategies used serve, or change them, as necessary. After reading, Sole suggests to evaluate the class achievements through summaries, central ideas, maps, or friezes, to know what was learnt from the reading.

Motivation and Reading Comprehension

It is recognized that one of the main keys for reading comprehension is the motivation or interest that the text elicits to the student, the beliefs that the readers have regarding the objective, or regarding what comprehension implies (Fernandez, 2014). Thus, motivation is achieved by a regular practice, in which the teacher has the role of animator or promoter of reading.

This deployment of reading depends largely on certain cognitive and affective processes. People do not learn to read in the emptiness, without the mediation of adults, but they do it in the environment created by the texts influenced by the context that encourages reading them. Therefore, it is necessary to examine how environment facilitates or hinders the existence of an adequate motivation and effective processes (Tapia, cited by Fernandez, 2014). This motivation can be taken to the classroom through an endless number of exercises and resources (such as the use of ICTs), in which the student could feel the protagonist of the teaching-learning process.

Tapia (as cited by Fernandez, 2014) proposes that inadequate motivation leads to read in the same way, inadequately. And the reading processes which are not very efficient, prevent the reader from experiencing that comprehension, he/she makes from the reading results an unrewarding activity and that produces aversion, which leads to abandonment of this habit. Teachers and learners need to understand the nature of the reading process and the factors that intervene in it. In addition, reading motivation development depends on processes and the environment in which she/he learns to read. Hence, the inescapable need arises that the teacher knows and explains the reason to do each activity as well as its objective. If teachers focus on the weight of motivation on the influence on reading comprehension, they will see how this reflects in the results of obtaining better results, and a different conception of reading.

Teaching Reading Strategies

Teaching reading involves helping the learner to mix variety of skills and teaching him or her to use those skills to master phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, comprehension and writing; for instance, many researchers and educators propose different strategies to encourage the reader to develop their reading skill.

According to Dutra (2014), annotating strategy will be used for different purposes, for instance: to write around the text any comment, variation or extra information that might appear when reading; as well as to characterize literature by writing about characteristics, mood, feelings or revelations the main and secondary characters from the story do along the lecture. Additionally, the annotation may be about a point of view, that occurs when reader annotates information from his/her specific experience according to the information offered by each author or character in the lecture.

Equally important, guided reading is a reading strategy from 25 to 45 minutes organized in four sections. First, before reading section, where students get access to their background knowledge about the topic they are going to read. Second, direct instruction stage, where teacher has the options of reminding to their students about a strategy they have learned or can teach them a new strategy like thinking aloud. Third, reading aloud stage, which links independent work stage, where students are instructed to read for themselves aloud. The objective is that the teacher tries to listen if students read fluently and encourage them to raise their voice if they read silently. The last stage is after reading stage, where students answer questions about the text, (Witter, 2013).

By the same token, modeled reading strategy consists of students following the teacher reading. Providing students with models of accurate pronunciation, fluent discourse sounds to whom the learners can compare and analyze their own proficiency level with and improve that all. When using this strategy, it is useful to use think aloud technique to express feelings or emphasize specific parts of the text that require a differentiation (Buswell and Lansky, 2014).

Recognizing sequencing format strategy and using graphic organizers strategy are two reading strategies proposed by Kemper et al (2014). In sequencing format strategy, the key is to identify the word that indicates the transition or paragraph change and represent in a sequence format. On the other hand, in using graphic organizers strategy the key information is organized from beginning to end in a cycle diagram or time line for example.

KWL reading strategy, according to Brough and Bergmann (2013), is used in reading activities to obtain specific information from the text by writing in a chart which is divided in three parts, K where the reader writes about what he or she knows, W where information about what is expected to find in the text is placed, and L where the information acquired after reading is organized. Regarding this strategy, Zygoris-Coe (2014), notes that KWL help readers when they experiment difficulties to comprehend academic and complex texts.

Skimming is a reading strategy that consist of avoiding details and looking for general information within a text according to Allum (2014). Evans (2014), suggests that it is mandatory for people to learn skimming texts, flowing the eyes over a written text the person is able to extract the general idea about the lecture. The author recommends not to re-read the text, to use the fingers instead, as a guide while reading and to take time to process the text after the reading.

On the other hand, scanning is a reading strategy whose process implies the reader previously has an idea about the information he or she is looking for. The strategy consists of moving the eyes through a sheet, book or written text to detect the required information. Here the person recognizes specific words, questions, characters or ideas; in other words, the reader intends to discover the needed content, not the whole text comprehension, (Chambers, 2013).

Finally, silent reading is defined by Hiebert and Reutzel (2014), as the reading strategy that needs self-motivation from the reader to spend time reading for fun, relaxing or learning about something. In this process, it is not necessary to analyze what we are doing, only it is necessary to be disciplined.

Reading Problems

Hulme and Snowling (2013) assert that it is necessary to differentiate between reading accuracy which is evaluated by instructing children to read aloud any word and reading comprehension which is evaluated by instructing the children to read large lectures aloud or in silence, then asking information about what she/he comprehended from the text to understand the affections or disorders learners experiment regarding reading.

The most common reading problems in a foreign language teaching process are related to two factors: acquisition of critical skills factors (vocabulary-grammar, phonological processing and syntactic awareness) and environmental factors (motivation or interest).

One of the critical skills that students face when they learn to read in a second language is the linguistic competence (oral language proficiency). It refers to the comprehension and oral expression skills, and also knowledge and proficiency in oral language, including the phonological component, vocabulary, morphology, grammar and pragmatic skills (Carver, 1994). Vocabulary knowledge, for example, is a critical skill that affects the processes of reading comprehension and, particularly, processes of language such as grammatical processing and construction of schemas and textual structures (Chall, 1987). A). Thus, for example, "normal readers can tolerate a small proportion of unknown words when they read a text without affecting their understanding because,

almost always, they extract the meaning of those from the context. However, it is known that if the proportion of unknown words is very high, it will be difficult to understand what read” (Carver, 1994, p. 413).

Decoding is necessary and useful when learners face unfamiliar words in a text, but also building a visual or orthographic vocabulary in the long-term memory is important for the reading of words because it contributes to the development of a fluent reading and to the understanding of the text. Therefore, practicing with appropriate materials to the age of the students brings with it gains in fluency in the recognition of words (Kame'enui and Simmons, 2002)

Another problem that has a direct and decisive influence on reading acquisition is the phonological processing. Siegel (1994) has identified three main components of phonological processing: phonological awareness (PA), phonological recoding, and phonological memory. The authors interpreted PA as the ability to deal with any phonological unit, that is syllables, intrasyllabic units (principle and rhyme), and phonemes. In fact, empirical evidence has been found in favor of existence of these PA components. Adopting this perspective, various studies have demonstrated that students do not access these linguistic units with the same ease. Thus, for example, the cited author has suggested that “the greatest difficulty for the recognition of phonemes in Hispanic children who learn to read and write is because they do not constitute explicit linguistic units in the perception and / or production of speech in the same way as syllables or words. However, depending on certain phono-articulatory properties, learners are able to recognize some phonemes as those whose pronunciation can be prolonged (fricatives, vibrant, etc.)” (Siegel, 1994, p. 334).

Lastly, the syntactic consciousness also plays an important role in the acquisition of reading, and it is another trouble learners have to deal with. This is defined as “the ability to consciously reflect on the syntactic aspects of language and exercise an intentional control on the application of grammatical rules” (Gombert, 1992, p.39). This skill is critical for the fluent and efficient reading of the text, and it requires making predictions about the words that would be inside of a sequence. Syntactic factors can influence the reading of functional words, such as prepositions and auxiliary verbs, which are hard to integrate into a semantic network (Siegel, 1994). Gombert (1992) used two types of tasks to evaluate syntactic knowledge, on the one hand, the tasks complete mutilated sentences (known in English as oral cloze task) in which children listen to the experimenter read sentences that are missing a word (Ex: Peter ____ to Susy ____an email a week ago). The task is to find the word "sent" that allows learners to construct a coherent phrase from the point of syntactic and semantic view. The other

task, syntactic judgment task, demands to make judgments of syntactic grammatical assessment and consists of listening to a series of sentences that are well constructed from the point of morpho-syntactic view, and a series of sentences that are not. The learner hastes judge whether the phrase is correct or not.

On the other hand, within the environmental factors that condition reading success among learners, it is possible to talk about three main aspects: the family income, the school environment and the other is related to the mass media.

First, the economic factor considers the situation of parents whose jobs do not allow them to share the proper time with their children; or the economic situation to buy a dozen books for each school-age child. It is important to note that many times, purchased books are almost useless (Fernandez, 2014). The multiplication of curricula and subjects means that texts adapted to the new subjects will not always be found.

In either of the two previous cases, it is quite comfortable to make a bibliographic repertoire based on photocopies taken from various books. The aesthetic problem, the ugliness of the photocopy, is not minor, as it undoubtedly contributes to the student's disinterest and concern for its content. Therefore, It is another element to demotivate. Thus, promoting reading among children and adolescents is a priority objective for parents and educators. The truth is that reading can be a more than desirable task for learners if its topics are properly chosen taking into account the age, the level of instruction and the interests of the population to be addressed. Today, there is so much material available for parents and teachers on the Internet, so that students can be given more options to have fun while they continue to learn (Fernandez, 2014). However, it is important to consider that the excessive and inadequate use of new communication technologies today, has made the book be forgotten, since this type of media attract the interest and attention of young people more effectively; such is the case of social networks like Twitter or Facebook. The new generations do not want to read, they prefer something more *chewed*, that does not require the work of imagination.

Student's and teacher's reading perception

Perceptions involve different issues, for instance some researchers aim to understand the effect of a determined strategy on students like Chang and Renandya (2017) who determined that extensive reading gives difficulties to the learners. Alhaisoni (2017) determine that activating students' prior knowledge and asking questions at the beginning, while reading and after the reading improves students' comprehension of the texts, the researcher also states that brainstorming is effective to improve comprehension.

Regarding reading perceptions, Soriano-Ferrer and Morte-Soriano (2017) carried out a study about motivation and concluded that in readers who experience difficulties like dyslexia their intrinsic motivation is lower than motivation from reader without reading difficulties. Jang, Kang and Kim (2015) concluded that extensive reading activities influence positively on students reading improvement and promotes self-motivation to read. Other researchers Qing and Ching ha (2015) concluded that teaching children vocabulary by using reading based exercises create problems in students especially in the correct use of verbs.

Based on the conclusions proposed by researchers, it is possible to affirm that reading in EFL at any level brings difficulties to the readers, especially before they understand how to use the strategies accurately, however, if students expect to become proficient and permanent readers they must stay motivated and focused.

Previous Studies

Clearly, reading is a primary skill that allows EFL learners to strengthen the whole language competence, by means of presenting it in a real context and being a source of a variety of activities that enrich student's knowledge on how language works; moreover, it increases students' experience about the world.

In order to prove that, Lopera (2011) conducted a study to report the effects of instruction based on reading strategies in English as a foreign language to a group of 26 students of a Colombian university. As a research method it was used the case study, and three instruments were applied to collect information: tests of reading comprehension, self-reflection in class at the strategy instruction phase, and a learning perception questionnaire. After students improved their reading comprehension, it was mainly concluded that instruction based on reading strategies is beneficial to develop students' self-confidence, and motivation toward English learning; furthermore, they feel confident to avoid the use of the dictionary.

Additionally, Sunggingwati and Mai (2013) sustain that the practice of teacher questioning in the EFL reading classroom is critical in supporting student learning. Their study proposed to examine the practice of teacher questioning and teaching reading in secondary schools in Indonesia. Teachers from third grade 11 classes from three different secondary schools took part in this multiple-site case study. Data were collected from the teachers in the form of observations, interviews, and textbook analysis. The findings from this study showed that the teachers trusted on the teacher's textbooks for teaching reading and for the kind of questions they asked to assist in reading comprehension. With this study, they provided important information about the practice of questioning strategies in a foreign language context. Thus, it is concluded that developing higher order

questioning strategies that differ from those in the textbooks encourage learners to use skills such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Only by developing these strategies can the aim of reading which is comprehension be achieved.

Rodriguez and Rodriguez (2011) carried out a study which aimed at identifying the reading strategies used by bilingual students in the high school. This study took place at the Bilingual Education Research Center from the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon, and 10 students participated here. It was an experimental study, and it used a before, during and after reading model, organized into three sessions with different instruments such as: a reading test, questionnaire and a survey. With the study results, they classified the reading strategies into introductory strategies, organizational strategies, elaboration strategies, and monitoring strategies. So, they concluded that the key to succeed in reading comprehension is to know when and how to apply the cognitive, metacognitive and socio affective strategies.

According to Ariong (2013, p. 19), "teaching reading comprehension typically requires a variety of instructional approaches in order to make children educational experiences more productive". With this study he expected to explore how teachers teach reading comprehension in primary school by analyzing three inclusive classrooms in Uganda. He used a case study design under a qualitative approach. So, data were collected through interviews and classroom observations in two schools and five English teachers participated. The main finding of this study was that the knowledge base for teaching reading comprehension has been articulated in superficial ways and without the guidance of a coherent theoretical framework. Secondly, while analysis of classroom data suggested considerable variability regarding what counts as reading comprehension instruction, this variability can in part be attributed to the ways in which reading comprehension instruction has been characterized in policy, assessment and resources that are available to teachers. Thus, it is demonstrated the implication of teachers' professional development about reading comprehension on students' reading success.

Florence (2013) provides another alternative that reaffirms the importance of reading approaches at learning EFL. He conducted a study to examine the effect of the Schema Reading Approach on children in Basic Two (lower primary) in the University of Legon. Through this research, he also explored the effect of two language teaching approaches, the Schema Reading Theory in contrast to the Basal Reading Approach in teaching reading comprehension. The first one supports that reading comprehension is an interactive process between the text and the reader's background knowledge. On the contrary, the second one is a phonic-centered approach to reading and conceives reading as a precise process which involves exact, detailed, sequential perception and

identification of letters, words, spelling pattern and larger language units. For this study, he carried out an experimental design, he involved experiments on two different groups, the experimental and the control group. He applied a pre-test and post-test. Children were involved through either the Schema or the Basal Reading Approach in their classroom lessons and exercises to determine the outcome of the study. Observation techniques were also applied. Comparing results from the pre-test and the post-test, the results showed that pupils taught with the Schema Theory performed significantly better than those taught through the Basal Reading Approach. It is concluded, that the application of the Schema approach is beneficial to lower primary pupils' reading interest and understanding.

Finally, whatever the reading technique it be, teachers must not forget the importance of motivation at reading process. Student's attitudes toward reading are a central factor affecting reading performance (Lindsey, 2010, p1). This author conducted a study which was aimed to examine students' attitudes toward reading during a summer reading experience at an urban higher education institution. The results were obtained through student observations, interviews and the Elementary Reading Attitude Survey. It was found that students exhibited positive attitudes toward reading during interviews. However, students' attitudes are multifaceted. Although students may be provided with high interest and/or challenging activities, they may not remain engaged. So, it is concluded that regardless of the activity or instruction, students might need additional support to remain engaged.

Thus, the referred cases of study provide clarity on the main concepts, models, theories and most significant characteristics of the study object. This is intended to arouse a theoretical and methodological reflection on the implications of this research work to ensure the identification of the students' needs on reading techniques in learning English as a second language.

CHAPTER II: METHOD

This research is a non-experimental study, which was developed under a mixed-method approach, data was collected, sorted out and analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative processes, in order to answer the main research questions (Hernandez, 2010). Consequently, the development of this study was in correlation to the achievement of the proposed objectives, by means of collecting theoretical-scientific and empirical information.

Setting and participants:

The present study took place in a private high school of Loja city. The sample was integrated by two English teachers and 100 students whose ages ranged between 16 to 17. All the students who participate in this research, are enrolled in the second year of baccalaureate level (BGU) and classified into two groups: students of high level and students of low level.

Procedures:

For collecting and analyzing theoretical and methodological references that support the importance of reading skills for EFL learners; theoretical methods were used such as synthetic –analytical, inductive – deductive and logical- historical; which after a process of literature review and bibliographical analysis helped to extract the most important elements that concern to the object of study (Bernal, 2010).

In addition, for gathering the empirical information, the observation technique was applied at the teaching practice, in order to identify teachers' reading strategies applied in the English classroom and characterize the students' performance at reading comprehension. First, it was designed an observation sheet structured according to indicators resulting from the main categories of the study questions. This research instrument was applied by means of observing teachers' activities directly in three class periods with each researched group.

In contrast to the information collected in the observation sheets, a survey and reading activities were designed and applied to the students to determine students' perception on reading strategies and activities used or taught by their teachers evaluate their reading comprehension level.

The collected data was organized by using Excel programs, and processed under the descriptive - statistical method guidelines, to continue with its explanation this time with the support of logical techniques of induction and deduction, analysis and synthesis; in

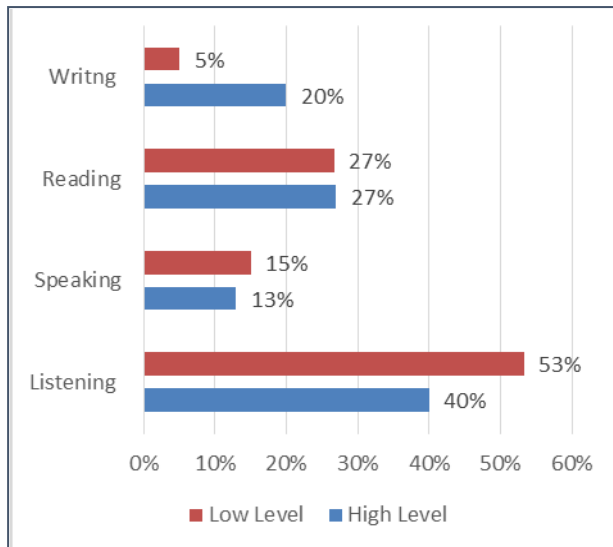
order to interpret what the empirical data reveal in contrast to the theoretical information referring to reading skills.

CHAPTER III: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study will show a quantitative description, qualitative and comparative analysis of the results which were gathered after processing information collected by applying a students' survey, class observation sheets, and reading activities.

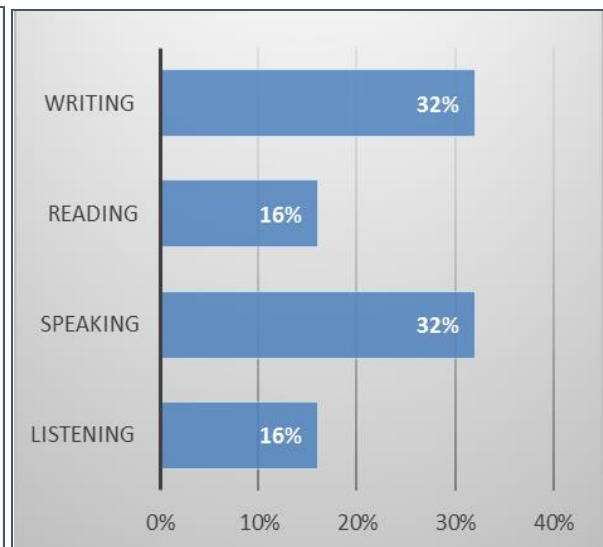
Thus, the following section will be organized in order to aim each specific objective and consequently find an answer to the main research questions.

Which English skill do you find harder to learn/practice?



GRAPH #1 English skill harder to learn / practice

Author: Soledad Mosquera
Source: Students' survey



GRAPH #2 Skill teachers focus on most during the class

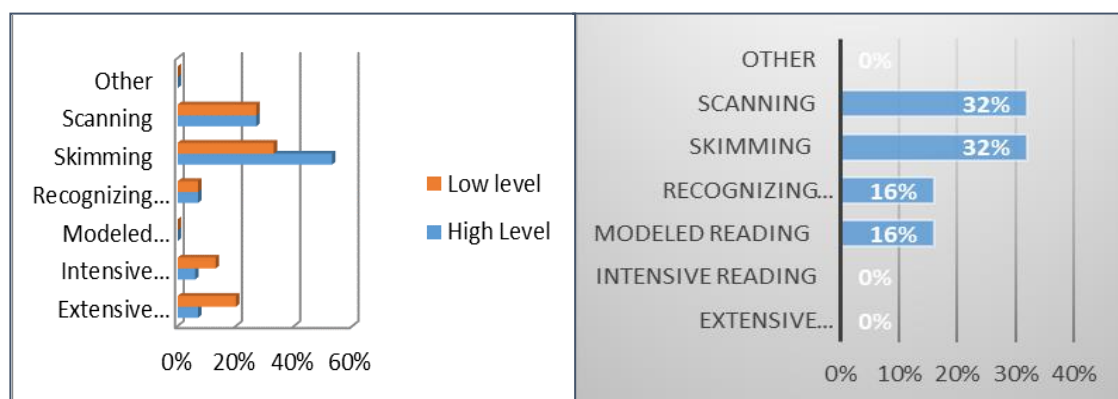
Author: Soledad Mosquera
Source: Observation sheet

To start, the results in graph one shows the students' perceptions on reading complexity in their EFL learning process, since a high index of students, both low and high level (27% respectively), estimate reading after listening ability, as one of the most difficult language skills to learn and practice. In contrast, the surveyed students point out that the least complicated skills are the writing and speaking, which imply incidence rates lower than 20% in both levels.

Sometimes, the learners' perception on the complexity of a specific ability determines the students' success on it, that is what Witter and Levin (2013) set. Additionally, for the same authors, it is also clear that reading and reading comprehension are multifaceted processes that are developed only with practice; however, as it can be observed in graph three, during the observed processes, teachers focused more on writing and speaking skills (32%) rather than reading skill (16% of reading incidence) by providing learners direct assignments. Clearly, with this type of tasks, teachers guide learners to structured activities and to follow specific learning routines.

Under those circumstances, reading activities were not widely promoted, and evidently, certain aspects of reading process, such as fluency, word recognition and the proper reading comprehension, just can be learned if they are practiced; and indeed, students hardly success on what they do not regularly practice.

Which strategies does teacher use most when reading?



GRAPH #3 Reading strategy teachers use most when teaching.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío
Source: Students' survey

GRAPH #4 Reading strategy the teacher promotes mosly.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío
Source: Observation sheet

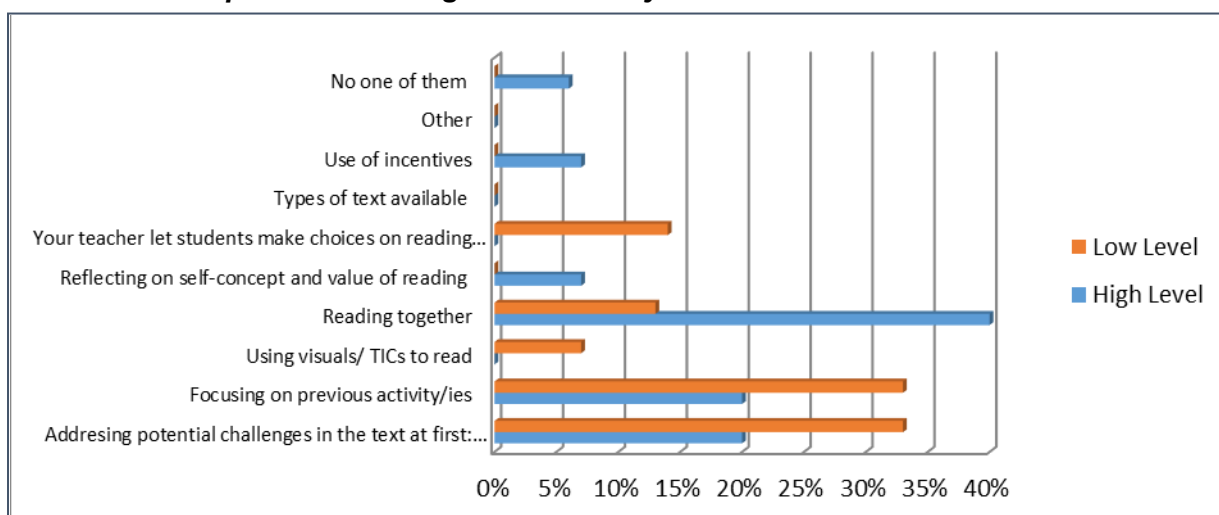
Graph 3 shows that most of the students of the high level represented in 53%, and 33% of the low level, are clear that the most regular strategy to promote reading processes used by teachers is the skimming strategy followed by the scanning strategy with 27% for both groups. While strategies such as extensive and intensive reading with 17% and 19% respectively, show a slight tendency of frequency among low level students. The modeled reading strategy is the least frequented for teachers of both teams. The data in this graph are corroborated with the information presented in graph 4 derived from the class observation process, which shows that teachers (32%) tend to use these two strategies in the development of reading activities with the students. Additionally, in this graph, although not referred by the students, it is evident that the less frequented reading strategies by the teachers are modeled and recognizing format strategies with 16%. Moreover, the findings while observing the classes reveal that English teachers poorly manage the process that any specific reading strategy implies to succeed at developing reading activities into class.

It is clear that somehow the teachers apply to pre-reading strategies of recognition of the format of the text and modeled reading. Particularly the first one is a very good activity at the time to engage students in the process of making connections with previous knowledge and / or activate them in oral expression activities, as it was demonstrated in the observation process. Additionally, notes taken down on the observation sheets clearly

show that modeled reading was poorly focused just to provide repeating activities or modeling pronunciation rather than engaging students as listeners and demonstrating, through thinking aloud, the use of reading strategies, as well.

On the other hand, the scanning and skimming strategies are the most frequently used ones by the teachers. Depending on the reading objective, there are very important strategies when carrying out a reading process. Thus, the first technique applies, if the student is induced, to look for ideas or concrete aspects of the text, and the second one, if the student is suggested to obtain a general idea of the text (Rodriguez and Rodriguez, 2009). Therefore, both teachers and students are widely justified to use them frequently. In contrast, teachers who work with the students group that corresponds to the low level, although in minimal incidence develop other activities associated with extensive and intensive reading techniques, it is likely that the level of language management of students demand that teachers focus his/her action on delving into details associated with the extension of the text and it depth.

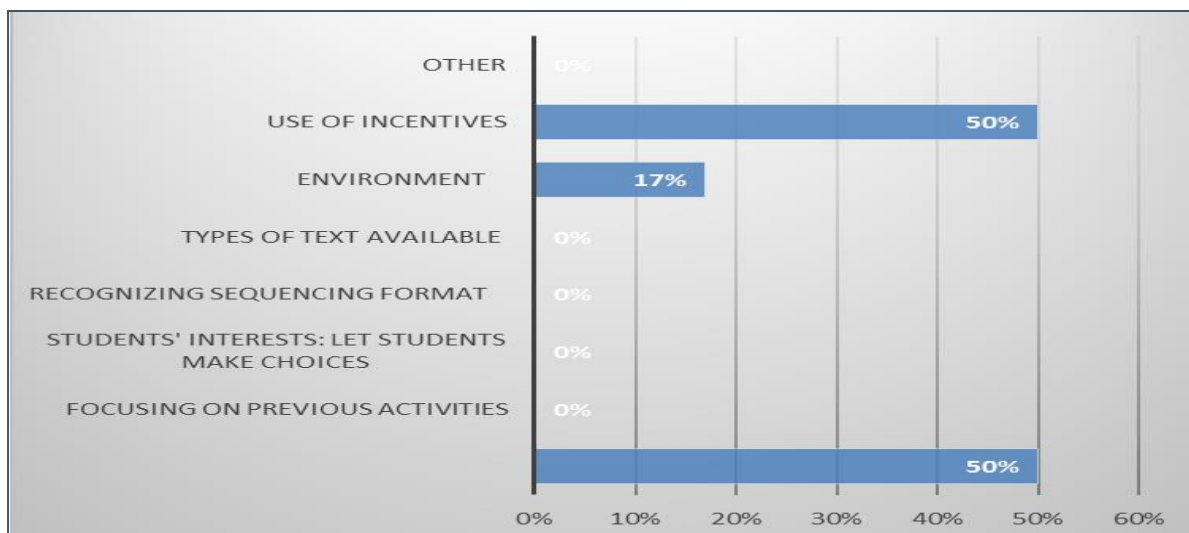
Do teachers promote reading motivation by means of...?



GRAPH # 5 Reading motivation

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Students' survey



GRAPH # 6 Students' encouragement to read.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Observation sheet

According to the fifth chart one of the actions promoted by teachers of high level students to motivate reading in learners is through pairing or grouping them; that is confirmed by 40% of the surveyed students of this level; while 33% of students at the lower level consider that the strategies used by their teachers to motivate them to read, center on addressing potential challenges in the text at first, especially those related to new vocabulary by introducing it literally previously.

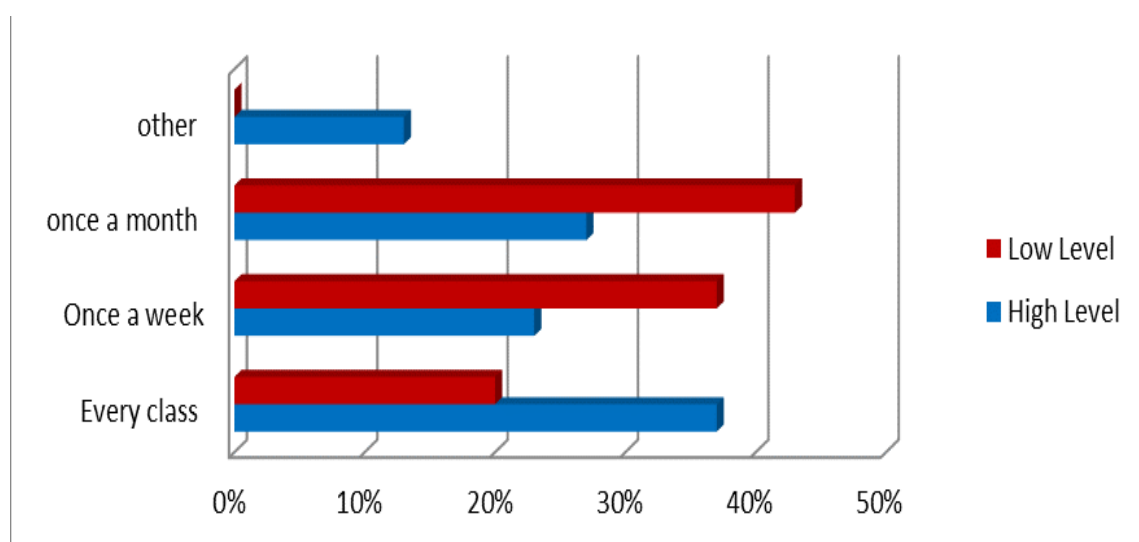
Evidently, promoting motivation sceneries to carry out reading processes is the first strategy in which every foreign language teacher should think when planning a reading activity. According to Tapia (2009) as cited by Fernandez (2014) proposes that inadequate motivation leads to read in the same way, inadequately; and the reading processes, which are not very efficient, prevent the reader from experiencing that comprehension learner makes from the reading results an unrewarding activity, and that produces aversion which leads to abandonment of this habit. In this regard, it is true that paired or grouping reading can be used in a variety of circumstances and with a variety of content. As it was observed and confirmed by Grabe and Stoller (2002), this strategy encourages students to work together and supports peer-assisted learning and cooperation through reading, listening, and responding to other readers; although, it is important that teachers keep alerting to low-achieving students, because most of them become passive and do not focus on the task.

On another hand, for any student (0%) of both levels, is perceptible the fact that teachers have a variety of additional reading material or resources on which students can decide what to read. Additionally to selected self-reading activities as a complement to the reading assignments in the classroom, it is good to question students to determine what they want to read, and to select reading materials aligned with their interests (Dutra, 2014). Moreover, particularly with students of the high level, it was not evident the use of ICT for these processes (0%). Thus, during the observation process, it was perceived that

the environment of motivation regarding the use of resources was such a scant occasion that represents the environment item with 17%, focused on the presentation of few printed images.

The exposed results reveal that in a wide way, the students' interest is not considered at the time of planning reading. As previously analyzed, the majority of reading activities that take place in the classroom are those considered in the workbook. This result does not go in accordance with Hollingbery's position (2015), who claims that learning environment plays an important role as a mediator of students' learning; therefore, the type of communication, the didactic and pedagogical resources that are experienced in it must increasingly resemble real environments required in real work contexts, and that is why, new technologies definitely could not be avoid.

Do teachers develop guided reading activities frequently; where before reading, during reading and after reading activities are included?



GRAPH #7 Guided reading activities.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Students' survey

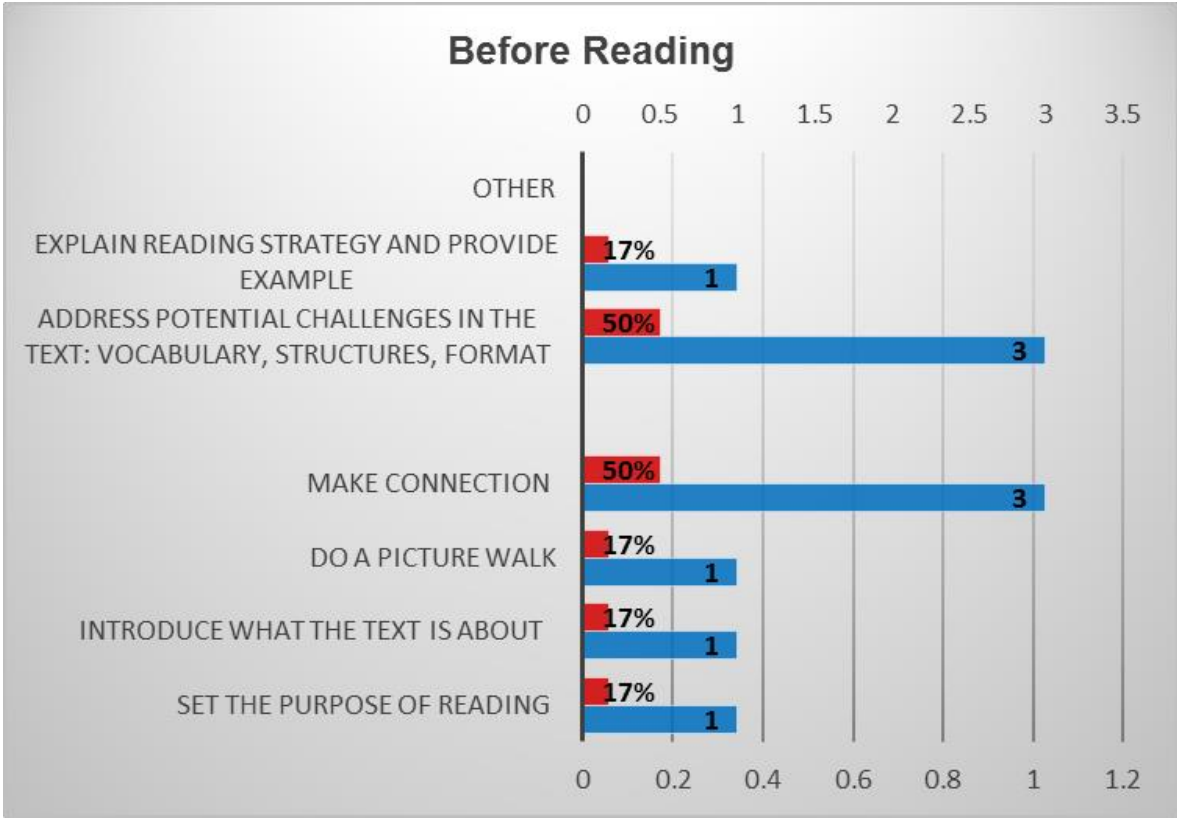
According to 43% of the students of the low level, their teachers apply guided reading activities once a month, and 37% of them indicate that they do it once a week. On the other hand, 37% of students at the high level ensure that guided reading activities are applied in each class.

As learners affirm, especially high level students' teachers are widely aware of the need to promote guided reading activities in each class; as they are an essential part of EFL learning. In this process, both teachers and students must be aware of that, that reading is about more than just recognizing and reciting words on a page: it is basically a conscious effort to understand what is being read. However, this data in contrast with the

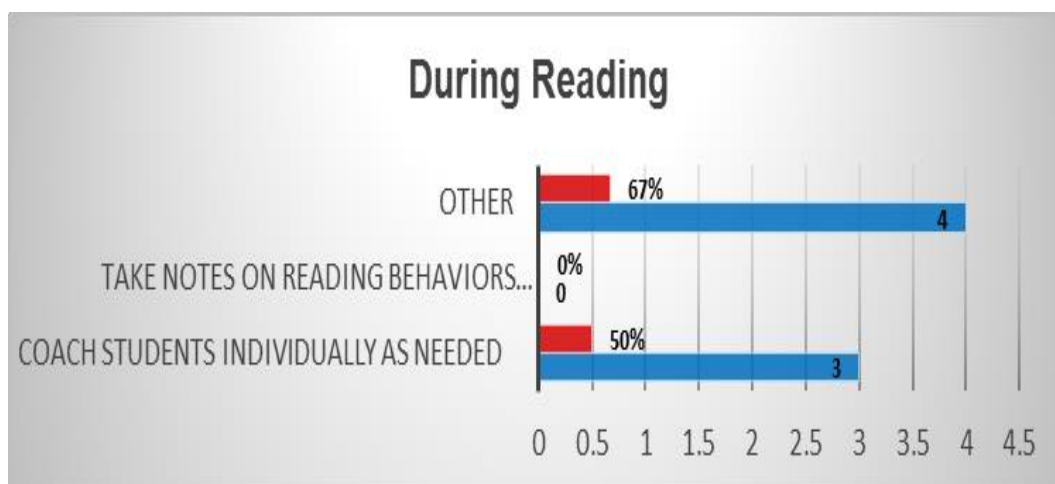
information collected while observing the classes show that students are not aware of what guided reading and reading comprehension imply; since, many of the reading activities promoted by the teachers had a mechanical component of giving an assignment and answer directly their questions related especially to new words meaning.

Naturally, the practice of guided reading in the classroom demands more organization in terms of planning by the teacher; since, it gives students the chance to apply the strategies they already know about a new text. Teachers provide support, but the ultimate goal is independent reading (Grab and Stoller, 2002). And this implies students to have an acceptable level of language management. However, the data that will be described later shows that this requirement is one of the main limitations of learners, especially those of a lower level.

Reading Comprehension activities carried out by teachers
INDICATORS



GRAPH # 8 Before Reading
Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío
Source: Students' survey



GRAPH # 9 During Reading

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Students' survey



GRAPH # 10 After Reading

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Teachers' observation sheet

The graphs present the frequency that teachers performed the activities involved in the reading process during the observed classes. Therefore, in graph 8, it is evident that 50% of teachers before undertaking a reading process with their students usually start making connections (personal connections, and connections with things in the outside world). This pre-reading strategy encourages some of the observed students to produce the language spontaneously. Although most of the students' answers were not grammatically well-organized, it was clear that when students are asked to make a conscious association with something that they have personally experienced, read about or heard about, it becomes easier for them to relate to the text and understand what is happening (Gombert, 1992).

Likewise, before reading activities in class, 50% of teachers also considered it important to help students to address potential challenges in the text, especially those ones related to vocabulary; however, in this regard, the observed teachers limited themselves to the listing of new words that students would find throughout the text, rather than to the practical exemplification of how to deal with new words in the context of reading. At the discretion of Carver (1994), providing literal vocabulary many times leads students to immersing in a literal translation process of each word; most of learners do not know what the majority of them means; producing thus a blockage and frustration.

During the reading process as it is shown in graph 9, most of the teachers (67%) additionally to monitoring the students' work (50%), dedicated time to answering their questions, which were exclusively referred to the meaning of certain words. At this point, it was noticed, that certain teachers used mimics or examples to clarify the meaning of the words consulted by their students. This type of strategy is very important when teaching vocabulary, given that students are challenged to make connections with their previous knowledge while interacting with listening and speaking skills (Chall, 1987).

Additionally, in most of the observed classes as it is represented in graph 10, after reading, the students were assigned to perform reading comprehension activities arranged in the text, which were related to answering questions, matching, deciding true or false and / or completing tables. At the end of the tasks, the teachers tend to do the check-up on the blackboard where the students are invited to participate; thus, a good number of them is willing to share their answers; however, a significant group avoids their participation. This data, in contrast to the previous information and additional notes compiled on the observation sheets, confirms that many students did not fulfill their activities successfully because they did not have the necessary skills, prior knowledge or study techniques to operate on their assignment; and some of them due to attitudes of apathy the subject, which was reflected in certain disciplinary actions.

Finally, in the general development of the activities, a high index of students did not show enthusiasm while doing reading activities, in some way complemented with certain indiscipline (noise); therefore, the surprise and variety effect was not considered. The use of varied resources and particularly associated with the use of ICT, play an important role today in terms of motivation. Additionally, in words of Hollingbery (2015), the age of the Internet requires changes in the educational world and English teachers have multiple reasons to take advantage of the new possibilities provided by ICT to drive their teaching practice towards a new educational paradigm that is more personalized and focused on student activity.

What percentage of a text do students understand when reading in English?



GRAPH # 11 Percentage of a text understood

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Students' survey

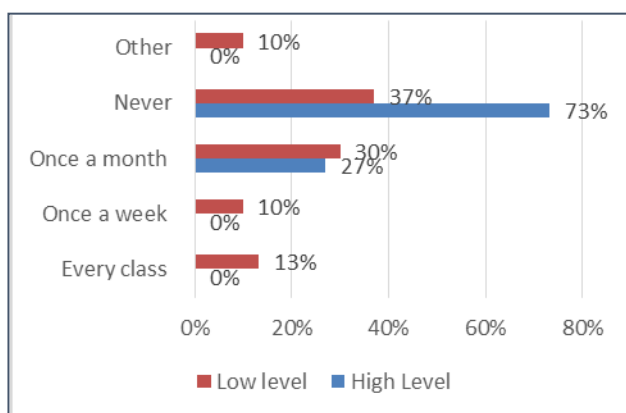
GRAPH # 12 Students reading comprehension level.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Reading activities applied to students

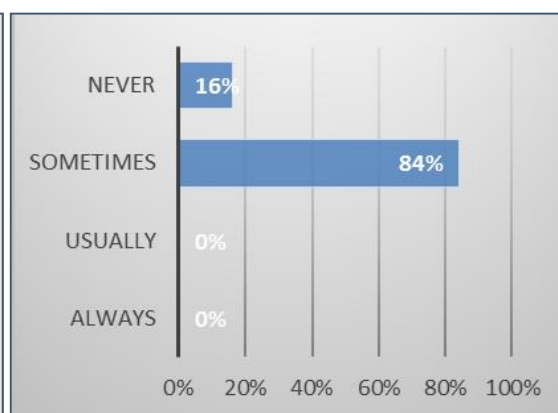
According to the survey results presented in graph 12, out of 100% of the surveyed students only 33% of high level students, estimate to be able to understand all of a text assigned to read, and none of the low level can do it. Data also show that 49% of the students of the high level and 33% of the low level say to comprehend almost 80% of a written text. Gradually in lower figures of text comprehension, 19% and 13% of the low level students affirm to understand just *almost 30%* and *almost 10%* of a written text. It is evident according to the results, that the students of the high level show more confidence, to self-evaluate their process of reading comprehension, and in fact their information is corroborated with the results obtained in the process of application of reading comprehension activities. On the other hand, the data in graph 9 determine that the students of the low level really have limitations when undertaking a process of reading comprehension, and they characterize it as a hard activity to carry out, especially due to the fact of lacking knowledge of vocabulary. Regarding this issue, Carver (1994, p. 413) confirms, "normal readers can tolerate a small proportion of unknown words when they read a text without affecting their understanding because, almost always, they extract the meaning of those from the context. However, it is known that if the proportion of unknown words is very high, it will be difficult to understand what read". So, based on the conclusions proposed by researchers, it is possible to affirm, that reading in EFL at any level brings difficulties to the readers, especially before they have understood how to use the strategies accurately.

Do teachers apply other activities that allow you to practice reading skills other than those taken from the main English textbook?



GRAPH # 13 Additional Reading activities applied in class.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío
Source: Students' survey



GRAPH #14 Frequency teacher Includes supplementary reading materials during the class.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío
Source: Observation sheets

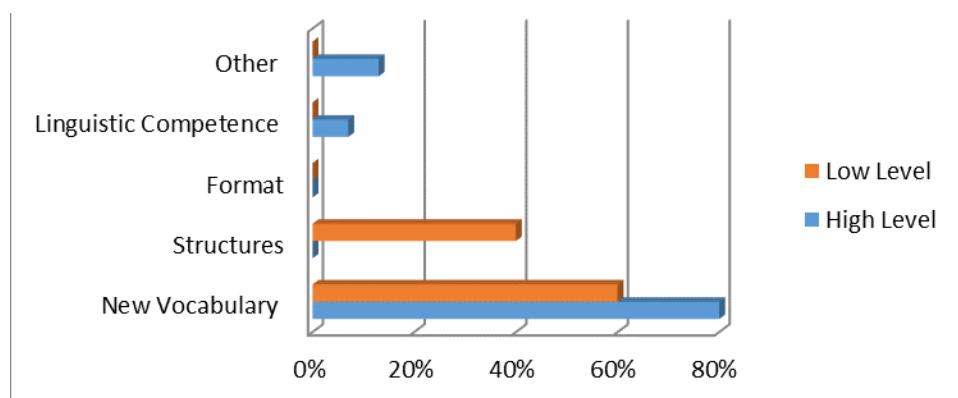
The first graph shows that most of the students of both surveyed levels: High and low, 73% and 37% of them respectively, agree to ensure that their teachers do not use reading material, additional to those ones considered in their textbooks; while 30% of the low level and 27% of the high level confirm that their teachers include additional activities at least once a month.

Thus, the information described above is confirmed with the data collected while observing the class, where it is actually visualized in the second graph that teachers almost never (84%) use additional material to promote reading activities during the development of the class. Thus, it is evident that the process of strengthening this skill is strictly limited to the tasks set out in the workbook, which undoubtedly enrich students' reading skills; however, it must be taken into account that the text books are designed for a standard student and are usually far from their needs and interests (Birch, 2014).

Students who study the sublevels of Baccalaureate usually at a higher or lower level, have developed general skills that allow them to understand different types of messages in different contexts, express themselves using communication techniques appropriate to each situation and level, and solve issues and problems using the target language. Hence, it is essential to challenge and develop their linguistic and communicative competence through different types of written or reading resources, which in many cases have to leave the schemes described in the textbooks (Goodman, 1996). Notably, ICT can be a great alternative for teachers, when offering a variety of resources to the teaching process from all possible aspects especially reading; since it is remarkable

when learners' interest is aroused when exposed to interactive, illustrated and versatile reading activities to those common to the classroom or textbook.

What are the main challenges students face when reading text to comprehend them?



GRAPH # 15 Students' main challenges when reading.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Students' survey

For both levels of students, the biggest challenge they face when reading is related to new vocabulary (high level 79% and low level 59%); although, the students of the low level represented in a 39%, also find the structures complicated.

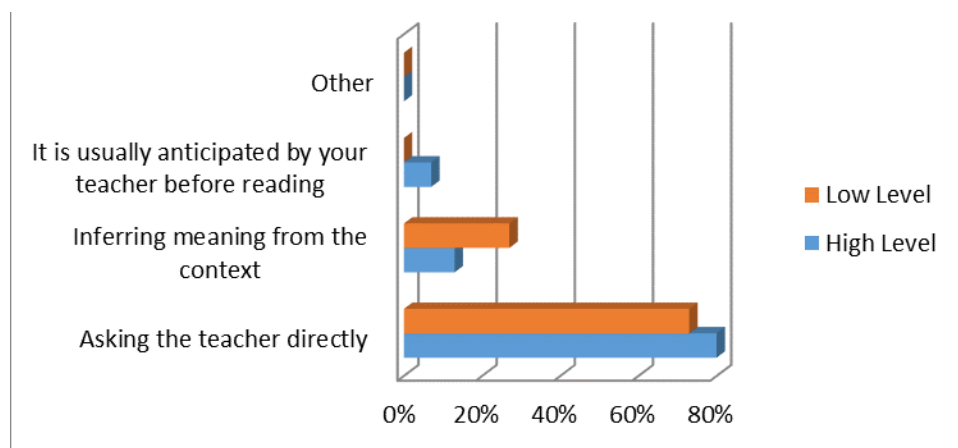
With the information presented, once again it is confirmed that one of the critical skills that students face when they learn to read in a second language, is the vocabulary knowledge. Students who had trouble learning to decode and recognize words often will have difficulty with reading comprehension. "Students who struggle with decoding rarely have a chance to interact with more difficult text and often learn to dislike reading. As a result, these students do not have sufficient opportunities to develop the language skills and strategies necessary for becoming proficient readers" (Chall, 1987, p. 7).

Additionally to vocabulary, low level students also notified grammar structures complicated by the time of reading. In fact, it is possible that teachers have presented them before and students know many of these structures but just related to specific studied coral objectives. Clearly, teachers do not promote reading activities enough that give the EFL learning process the required dynamics and it does not confine it in rigid patterns associated with certain contents.

In this context, English teachers must emphasize in their pedagogical practice the students' improvement on syntactic consciousness. This is defined as "the ability to consciously reflect on the syntactic aspects of language and exercise an intentional control on the application of grammatical rules" (Gombert, 1992, p.39). This skill is critical

for the fluent and efficient reading of the text, and it requires making predictions about the words that would be inside of a sequence. Syntactic factors can influence the reading of functional words, such as prepositions and auxiliary verbs, which are hard to integrate into a semantic network (Siegel, 1994).

How do students address potential challenges in the text?



GRAPH #16 How to address potential challenges

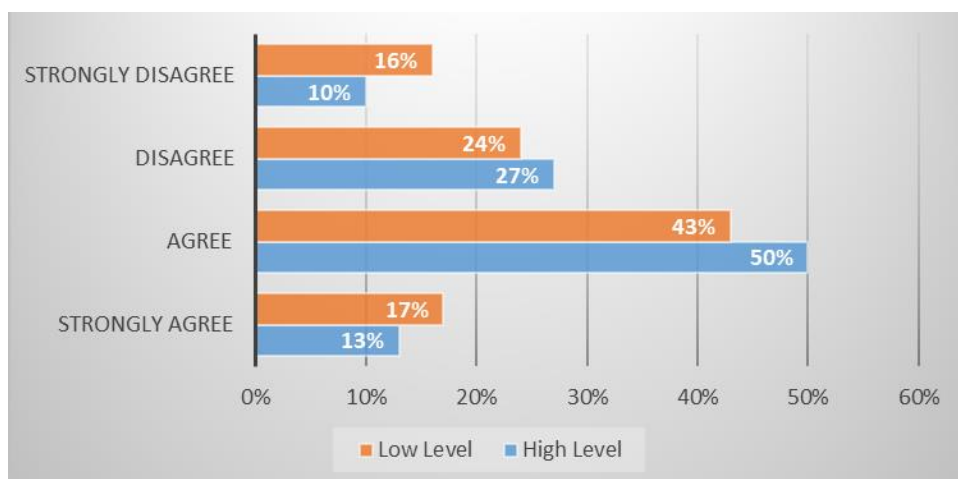
Responsible: Author, Soledad Mosquera Riofrío

Source: Students' survey

Among most of the students at both levels low and high (80% and 73% respectively), potential challenges (new vocabulary, structures, format) in the text by the time of reading, are associated especially to scant vocabulary; problem which is solved by asking the teacher directly, and sometimes inferring it from context (13% high level and 27% low level). For the 10% of students of high level, new vocabulary is usually anticipated by teachers.

In general, the results suggest that students feel confident at asking teacher when facing an unknown word, especially when developing reading activities; but it is also clear that most of the students, most of the times, are not ready to face independently this kind of challenge. That is why Lopera (2012) argues that strategies for success at reading comprehension must be taught directly by teachers. Since simply providing opportunities or requiring for learners to read will not teach many students the comprehension strategies, in contrast they need to become good readers. These ones need to be taught directly as students learn to read simple sentences and this direct instruction needs to continue in different forms throughout a student's school experience. These experiences mainly include teaching students about the important, useful, and difficult vocabulary words before learners read the text; this will help them remember the words and improve comprehension; and guide students learn to use context clues to determine the meanings of words.

According to your experience, how important is reading for EFL learning?



GRAPH # 17 Importance of reading for EFL learning.

Author: Soledad Mosquera Riofrio

Source: Students' survey

The graph shows that an important index of students from both researched groups: 43% low level and 50% high level, agree that reading activities help them to improve their EFL learning. Although there is also a significant number of students represented in a 24% and 27% respectively who disagree with it. Additional notes confirm that students see reading inspite of its estimated difficulty as an excellent mean to learn, especially new vocabulary and practice pronunciation when reading aloud, or hearing a modeled reading.

As Rosdiana (2011) explains, reading has a great importance on students' academic success; that means, students who have poorly developed reading skill are usually predicted to fail. The author also states that reading can assist the students to understand the organizational pattern of writing. When students read a lot, they can gain much information to improve their writing skill. This gained information can be also related to the increase of new vocabulary. Undoubtedly, students above who refer reading as a mean to increase vocabulary skill are completely right; however, it is the teacher's ability to introduce it which determines students' success at operating in new vocabulary presented when reading.

However, the previous analysis determines that most of the teacher's activity in this school regarding to EFL reading teaching process, needs to develop the students' ability to consciously reflect on the syntactic aspects of language and make predictions about the meaning of the words that would be inside the text. On the contrary, teachers literally give learners these requirements, and do not provide the students with guidelines or strategies to identify or cope with them independently in reading contexts. As a result, a significant index of students in both levels (low 16% and high 10%) discourages the importance of reading in the acquisition of the English linguistic competence.

CONCLUSIONS:

After summarizing the analysis and interpretation of the empirical information in contrast to the scientific information described in the framework section, it can be concluded that:

Most of students do not have an acceptable level of language management to cope with reading activities. Hence, this skill is considered by students of both levels surveyed as one of the most complicated skills to learn and practice in the learning process of the English language. But even so, almost all learners are clear about the transcendental importance of reading practice, especially for the enrichment of their vocabulary skill for future productions, whether oral or written.

The process of reading skill acquisition is not associated by both teachers and students with processes of inference, systematization or contextual analysis, proper to comprehensive reading; but to mechanical processes of direct meaning research with the teacher, with which students train memory skills rather than comprehension skills.

Writing and speaking are the language skills teachers focus on most during their classes, what drives student do not have enough practice on the other skills specially reading, as a result, surveyed students find it a difficult or boring activity to cope with.

The way teachers address students' possible potential challenges in the text at first (pre-reading) related especially to vocabulary do not make students stronger to face new vocabulary in a text; because teachers literally provide meanings, rather than provide students with guidelines to identify or cope with vocabulary meaning in reading contexts.

Students' motivation level towards reading is widely associated with the type of resources, reading strategies and incentives that teachers use to carry out the process. Thus, actions such as indiscipline, indifference to the reading activities assigned and diagnostic results, show that for most researched students, the reading techniques and general reading material teachers use frequently, are not completely adjusted to their interest or level.

Guided reading is recognized by researched teachers as an essential tool for EFL teaching practice, which implies a conscious effort to understand what is being read. However, teachers' planning does not reflect enough organization in terms of planning, to match it; going beyond what is simply proposed in the textbook.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ecuadorian Ministry of Education should promote constantly updated and training events in new classroom methodologies for English teachers, especially those related to reading comprehension, in order to provide them with new tools to operate and make students' English learning process an enjoyable activity; where reading strengthens not only EFL learning but students' critical skills.

Institutional authorities should control and guide that English teachers' planning activities include reading learning tasks for students, which adjust to their level and interests.

Teachers should consider addressing potential challenges in the text at first related to vocabulary, structures, format, and focus them on previous activities while developing reading activities; which does not mean that teachers should literally provide these requirements, but rather provide the students with guidelines to identify or cope with them in reading contexts.

In general development of the reading activities, it is necessary that teachers promote activities of reading not only those attached to the textbook, but additional ones where the surprise and variety effect is considered. The use of varied resources and particularly associated with the use of ICT, play an important role today in terms of motivation.

Teachers should train their students with different types of reading techniques and strategies, to help them to deal with a variety of written messages in different contexts independently.

It is essential that teachers challenge and develop students' linguistic and communicative competence through different types of written or reading material, which in many cases are left behind the schemes described in textbooks.

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ANNEXES

Annex - 1



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
READING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITY N° 1

Your name: _____ Date: _____

Directions:

- This test aims to diagnoses your reading comprehension level
- Read the dialog carefully and next do the suggested activities
- You will have 60 min. to complete the test.

Fight for Equality – Thurgood Marshall

Thurgood Marshall was born in Maryland in 1908. He could not study law at the college he wanted because he was black, so he studied at an all-black student college named Howard University.

Marshall became a lawyer and helped black people fight for their rights. He won most of his cases. One of his most famous cases was Brown vs. the Board of Education.

Marshall won the case to show everyone that separate is not equal. He argued that black students deserve to attend school with white students in the same building. There should not be separate schools for black students and separate schools for white students.

Marshall believed that you can't have separate schools for people just because of their skin color. You can't have separate restaurants, drinking fountains, or buses.

Marshall was put on the Supreme Court, which is the highest court of the United States that decides the laws for our country. He was appointed to the Supreme Court by the President of the United States as the first black Justice.

Marshall is remembered with honor for his strength and his wisdom in helping black people throughout the United States when he was a lawyer and a Supreme Court Justice. He is remembered because he knew right from wrong and he fought for what he knew was right.

Many schools and other types of buildings have been named after him. We give Thurgood Marshall our thanks for fighting for equality.

1. What is the Supreme Court?

- a. the name of a college
- b. a national court
- c. a court in one state
- d. a local court

2. What does the “fight for equality” mean?

- a. a fist fight b. allowing people to have the same rights
- c. allowing black people to have power over white people d. allowing white people to have power over black people

3. What is the main idea of this text? Why do you think this text was written?

4. Why do you think the author selected the title *Fight for Equality*?

Retrieved from: http://www.k5learning.com/sites/all/files/worksheets/K5_RC_Gr4_LR2_SampleW.pdf

ANNEX – 2



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
READING COMPREHENSION ACTIVITY N° 2

Your name: _____ Date: _____

Directions:

- *This test aims to diagnoses your reading comprehension level*
- *Read the dialog carefully and next do the suggested activities*
- *You will have 45 min. to complete the test.*

Musical Instruments to Play

A musical instrument is a device created to make musical sounds. Anything that makes a sound can be used as a musical instrument.

The history of musical instruments goes back to the beginning of culture. People first used instruments as ritual: a hunter might use a trumpet to signal a successful hunt; a drum might be used in a religious ceremony.

Cultures later composed and performed a set of sounds called a melody for entertainment. Musical instruments were needed. Some historians report that the earliest musical instrument was a simple flute. Many of the earliest musical instruments were made from animal skins, bone, wood, and other non-durable materials.

Musical instruments were developed separately in the different countries and regions of the world, but when civilizations shared information amongst themselves, the development of instruments spread. For example, cultures of North America, South America, and Central America used similar instruments and shared these ideas of making instruments that were alike in some way.

Many different ways have been used to classify instruments over the years. One way to classify instruments is to put them in groups by the range of music the instruments can play. Another classification is to put them together by what they are made out of. However, the most common method of grouping instruments is by how they produce sounds. The academic study of musical instruments is called organology.

Woodwinds and brass (sometimes called the “wind” instruments), string, percussion, electric, and keyboard are types of instruments grouped according to how they are made and the range of music and sounds they play.

Woodwind and brass instruments include the trumpet, clarinet, flute, oboe, trombone, tuba, and harmonica. Stringed instruments include the banjo, guitar, harp, violin, and viola. Percussion instruments include the cymbal, chime, timpani, drum, and tambourine. Electronic instruments are the keyboard and the synthesizer. Keyboard instruments include the accordion, organ, and piano.

Maybe you will play an instrument someday. Will it be a woodwind or brass, stringed, percussion, electronic or a keyboard instrument?

A. Use each word in a sentence. Underline the word used.

Device: _____

Signal: _____

Melody: _____

Classify: _____

B. Matching. Draw a line to connect which musical instruments belong to the categories listed in the story.

- | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. woodwind and brass | a) banjo, guitar, harp |
| 2. stringed | b) trumpet, clarinet, flute |
| 3. percussion | c) keyboard, synthesizer |
| 4. keyboard | d) accordion, organ, piano |
| 5. electronic | e) cymbal, chime, drum |

C. Crossword. Use these words to solve the musical clues: device, signal, ceremony, composed, performed, melody, classify, range

Across

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. formed; made up of | 5. something invented, devised, fitted |
| 6. sweet music | 7. played |

Down

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1. To group according to some system | 2. a sign giving warning or notice |
| 3. The distance between; extent | 4. a special act done on special occasions |

Retrieved from: http://www.k5learning.com/sites/all/files/worksheets/K5_RC_Gr4_LR2_SampleW.pdf



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA
La Universidad Católica de Loja
OBSERVATION SHEET

Informative data

School: _____
Level/class: _____ “ ”
Place and date: Loja, _____
Class period: _____ **Time:** _____
Class observer: Soledad Mosquera Riofrío (author)

b. Class Development**1. Which skill does the teacher focus on most during the class?**

a. listening () b. speaking () c. reading () d. writing ()

Notes: _____

2. Does the teacher include supplementary reading materials during the class?

a. always () b. usually () c. sometimes () d. never ()

Notes: _____

3. Type of reading teacher uses most

Reading aloud class		Silent Reading in class	
---------------------	--	-------------------------	--

Notes: _____

4. The reading strategy the teacher promotes mostly in the class are:

Guided reading () Modeled Reading () Recognizing sequencing format ()
 Skimming () scanning () Other: _____

Notes: _____

5. READING COMPREHENSION

Before Reading.			
Does the teacher...?	Details	Do most of the students...?	Details
- Set the purpose of reading ()		Look enthusiastic about working reading activities ()	

- Introduce what the text is about ()		Answer teacher's questions ()	
- Do a picture walk ()		Make inferences about what the text is about ()	
- Make connection (previous knowledge) ()		Make connection easily (previous knowledge) ()	
- Address potential challenges in the text: vocabulary, structures, format ()		Other: _____	
- Explain reading strategy and provide example ()			
During Reading.			
- Coach students individually as needed ()		Independently apply reading strategy ()	
- Take notes on reading behaviors used/not used ()		Address potential challenges in the text easily: vocabulary, structures, format ()	
		Ask and answer questions ()	
- Other: _____		Make inferences ()	
		Draw conclusions ()	
		Other: _____	
After reading			
- Promotes a comprehension conversation/activity ()		Begin a comprehension conversation ()	
- Other: _____		Retell key events ()	
		Identify main idea ()	
		Find easy to organize the author's ideas, example: graphic organizer ()	
		Other: _____	

6. Does the teachers carry out actions to encourage students to read?

Yes () No () Sometimes ()

Which ones?

Promoting self-concept and value of reading () Let students make choices () Types of text available () Environment () Use of incentives () _____

Other () _____

Notes: _____

General Notes: _____

Teacher's signature

Observer



UNIVERSIDAD TÉCNICA PARTICULAR DE LOJA

La Universidad Católica de Loja

Student's questionnaire

Dear student,

This questionnaire aims to gather information to know how effective are reading strategies or activities promoted by your teacher on your EFL learning.

1. Which English skill do you find harder to learn/practice?

Listening () reading () speaking () writing ()

Why? _____

2. Does your teacher apply other activities that allow you to practice reading skills other than those taken from the main English textbook?

a. Every class () b. Once a week () c. Once a month () d. Never ()

Other ().....

3. Which type of reading do you prefer while working with reading in class?

Reading aloud class		Silent Reading in class	
---------------------	--	-------------------------	--

Why? _____

4. Which strategies does your teacher se most when reading? Choose one option.

- *Extensive reading*: Your teacher encourages you to read many books in the target language, according to your interests and preferences, without the pressure of being evaluated at the end of reading ()

- *Intensive reading*: When reading, your teacher encourages you to capture a large number of data paying attention to the minimal details ()

- *Modeled Reading*: Your teacher encourages you to read repeating after him/her ()

- *Recognizing sequencing format*: Your teacher encourages you to identify the word that indicate the transition or paragraph change and represent in a sequence format ()

- *Skimming*: Your teacher encourages you to read quickly to try to get a general idea of the text ()

- *Scanning*: Your teacher encourages you to read to look for specific information ()

- *Other*: _____

Notes: _____

5. **Does your teacher promotes reading motivation by means of...? Choose one option.**

Addressing potential challenges in the text at first: vocabulary, structures, format ()

Focusing on previous activity/ies ()

Using visuals/TICs to read ()

Reading together ()

Reflecting on self-concept and value of reading ()

Your teacher let students make choices on reading texts ()

Types of text available ()

Use of incentives ()

Other () _____

No one of them ()

6. **Does your teacher develop guided reading activities frequently; where before reading, during reading and after reading activities are included?**

Every class () once a week () once a month ()

other: _____

7. **What are the main challenges that you face when reading text to comprehend them?**

New Vocabulary () structures () format () linguistic

competence (oral language proficiency) () other ()

8. **How do you address potential challenges in the text: vocabulary, structures?. Choose one option.**

Asking the teacher directly () Inferring meaning from context ()

It is usually anticipated by your teacher before reading () Other () _____

9. **What percentage of a text do you understand when you read in English?**

100% () almost 80% () almost 50% () almost 30% ()

almost 10% () Other: _____

10. **According to your experience, how important is reading for EFL learning?**

Strongly Agree () Agree () Disagree () Strongly disagree ()

Thank you very much.