



**UNIVERSITY OF AZUAY**  
**FACULTY OF PHILOSOPHY, LETTERS, AND**  
**EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**  
**SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**

**“A Didactic Portfolio to Improve the Reading  
Skill in Sophomore Classes, Groups 1, 2, and 3, at  
*Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingüe Rosa de  
Jesús Cordero*”**

RESEARCH PROJECT PRIOR TO OBTAINING THE  
BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES,  
ENGLISH SPECIALIZATION

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All the contents of this work are the authors' responsibility.

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Magali and Cathy

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my beloved husband Beto, whose support and unconditional love have been essential in these four years of studies; to my two daughters, Verito and Anita Maria, my greatest teachers and the reason of my existence, for all the sacrifices they made while I attended classes; to my dearest mother, Mariana, whose serenity and affection helped me in the culmination of this project.

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## DEDICATION

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## INDEX

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	1
INTRODUCTION .....	2
CHAPTER I: DIAGNOSIS	
1.1 Diagnostic Test .....	4
1.2 Results of the Diagnostic Test .....	12
1.3 Analysis of the Reading Skills Students already Possess .....	14
1.4 Determination of the Reading Skill Areas to Be Developed .....	18
CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	
2.1 What is Reading Comprehension? .....	20
2.1.1 Understanding the Reader's Role in the Comprehension Process .....	21
2.1.2 Educational Applications .....	21
2.2 Concept Mapping .....	26
2.2.1 Spider Map .....	27

2.2.2	Series of Events Chain .....	28
2.2.3	Continuum Scale .....	29
2.2.4	Compare/Contrast Matrix .....	29
2.2.5	Network Tree .....	30
2.2.6	Fishbone Map .....	30
2.2.7	Cycle .....	31
2.2.8	Venn Diagram .....	31
2.2.9	Flow Diagram .....	32
2.2.10	K-W-L-H .....	32
2.2.11	Mind Maps .....	33
2.2.12	Concept Mapping .....	34
2.3	Importance of Reading .....	37
2.4	Reading Strategies .....	40
2.4.1	Phonics .....	41
2.4.2	Words and Phrases .....	42
2.4.3	Whole Sentences .....	43
2.4.4	Language Experience Approach .....	44

2.4.5	Word Association .....	46
2.4.6	Rebus .....	47
2.5	Stages in the Reading Process.....	49
2.6	Strategies to Activate Prior Knowledge or Pre-Reading Strategies .....	50
2.6.1	Brainstorming .....	50
2.6.2	Predictions .....	53
2.6.3	Semantic Mapping .....	55
2.6.3	Know - Want to Know – Learned .....	56
2.6.4	Pre- Questions .....	57
2.7	Strategies during Reading.....	59
2.7.1	Annolighting .....	61
2.7.2	Inferential Reading .....	62
2.7.3	Double Entry Journal .....	63
2.7.4	Reading Guides .....	64
2.7.5	Structured Note-Taking .....	65
2.8	Strategies After Reading .....	67
2.8.1	Exit Slips .....	67



2.8.2	Class Discussions .....	69
2.8.3	Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) .....	69
2.8.4	Summarizing .....	71

### CHAPTER III: PORTFOLIO FOR TEACHERS

3.1	Exercises .....	73
3.1.1	Placebos Prove Powerful .....	73
3.1.2	Time's Running Out .....	79
3.1.3	Why is Laughter the Best Medicine .....	83
3.1.4	The Mind Machine .....	88
3.1.5	A Traveler's Tale .....	94
3.1.6	Action Sport and Risk-Taking.....	99
3.1.7	The Best Ad Missed the Boat at Cannes.....	104
3.1.8	Making Fun of Education.....	106
3.1.9	The Gift of the Magi.....	110
3.1.10	The Fruit Cake Special.....	113
3.2	Answer Key.....	117

## CHAPTER IV: VALIDATION OF THE PROJECT

4.1	Contextualization .....	124
4.2	Group Selection .....	126
4.3	Project Presentation .....	127
4.4	Project Validation .....	127
4.5	Analysis of Results .....	131
CONCLUSIONS .....		142
RECOMMENDATIONS .....		144
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....		145

## INDEX OF GRAPHICS

	Page
GRAPHIC 1: DIAGNOSTIC TEST GRADES .....	12
GRAPHIC 2: RESULTS OF THE DIAGNOSTIC TEST IN PERCENTAGE .....	13
GRAPHIC 3: SPIDER MAP .....	28
GRAPHIC 4: SERIES OF EVENTS CHAIN .....	28
GRAPHIC 5: CONTINUUM SCALE .....	29
GRAPHIC 6: COMPARE/MATRIX .....	29
GRAPHIC 7: NETWORK TREE .....	30
GRAPHIC 8: FISHBONE MAP .....	30
GRAPHIC 9: CYCLE .....	31
GRAPHIC 10: VENN DIAGRAM .....	31
GRAPHIC 11: FLOW DIAGRAM .....	32
GRAPHIC 12: K-W-L-H .....	33
GRAPHIC 13: MIND MAPS .....	34
GRAPHIC 14: CONCEPT MAP .....	35
GRAPHIC 15: PHONICS .....	41

GRAPHIC 16:	PHONETIC SYMBOLS .....	42
GRAPHIC 17:	WORDS AND PHRASES .....	43
GRAPHIC 18:	WHOLE SENTENCES .....	44
GRAPHIC 19:	LANGUAGE EXPERIENCE APPROACH .....	46
GRAPHIC 20:	WORD ASSOCIATION .....	47
GRAPHIC 21:	REBUS .....	48
GRAPHIC 22:	REBUS SIMPLE EXAMPLES .....	48
GRAPHIC 23:	KNOW-WANT-TO KNOW-LEARNED ....	57
GRAPHIC 24:	CAUSE/EFFECT .....	66
GRAPHIC 25:	COMPARE/CONTRAST (VENN DIAGRAM) .....	66
GRAPHIC 26:	PROBLEM-SOLUTION .....	67
GRAPHIC 27:	QUESTION 1 TEACHER'S SURVEY....	131
GRAPHIC 28:	QUESTION 2 TEACHER'S SURVEY....	132
GRAPHIC 29:	QUESTION 3 TEACHER'S SURVEY....	133
GRAPHIC 30:	QUESTION 4 TEACHER'S SURVEY....	134
GRAPHIC 31:	QUESTION 5 TEACHER'S SURVEY....	135

GRAPHIC 32:	QUESTION 1 STUDENTS' SURVEY....	136
GRAPHIC 33:	QUESTION 2 STUDENTS' SURVEY....	137
GRAPHIC 34:	QUESTION 3 STUDENTS' SURVEY....	138
GRAPHIC 35:	QUESTION 4 STUDENTS' SURVEY....	139
GRAPHIC 36:	QUESTION 5 STUDENTS' SURVEY....	140

# RESUMEN

Ausubel desarrolló la teoría de Aprendizaje Significativo, la cual especifica que los estudiantes deben ser considerados como el elemento más importante de la clase y por lo tanto jugar un rol participativo en el proceso de aprendizaje.

Basados en la teoría de Ausubel, el uso de organizadores gráficos y la gran idea de Novak de mapas conceptuales resultan obligatorios en la clase. Los organizadores gráficos son cuadros que ayudan a las estudiantes a conectar la nueva información con las ideas ya existentes en sus mentes, o establecer conexiones entre los nuevos conceptos. De esta forma la estudiante puede hacer comparaciones, análisis, clasificaciones, etc.

En el momento de planeación de una clase de lectura es muy importante tener en cuenta los tres momentos: pre-reading, during-reading and after-reading. Las actividades desarrolladas en cada una de estas etapas son trascendentales en el proceso de mejoramiento de las destrezas de lectura en las estudiantes.

El propósito de este trabajo es facilitar el proceso de mejoramiento de las subdestrezas de lectura de las estudiantes en la clase de inglés a través de la creación de un portafolio didáctico el cual puede ser útil para profesores en la Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingüe Rosa de Jesús Cordero, especialmente aquellos profesores de primeros de bachillerato.

En el portafolio, los profesores encontrarán muchas estrategias y actividades para las tres etapas de lectura. De manera que el nivel de lectura comprensiva mejore mientras el profesor y las estudiantes disfruten de la clase.

## **Palabras Clave:**

*Organizadores gráficos, pre-reading, during-reading, after-reading, portafolio, aprendizaje significativo, Ausubel, Novak*

# ABSTRACT

Ausubel developed the theory of Meaningful Learning, which specifies that students should be considered the most important part of the class and therefore play a very participative role in the process of learning.

Based on Ausubel's theory, the usage of graphic organizers and Novak's greatest idea of concept maps are mandatory in class. Graphic organizers consist of charts that help students connect the new information with the ideas already existing in their minds, or to establish links between new ideas. This way the student can make comparisons, analyses, classifications, etc.

During the planning of a reading class, it is very important to have in mind the three stages of reading: pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading. The activities developed in each of these parts are transcendental in the process of improving students' reading skills.

The purpose of this thesis is to facilitate the process of improving reading skills for students in English classes through the creation of a didactic portfolio which can be useful to teachers in *Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingue Rosa de Jesus Cordero*, especially those teachers who have Sophomore classes.

In the portfolio, teachers can find many strategies and activities for the three stages of a reading lesson plan, so that the students' level of reading-comprehension may improve while both the teacher and students have an enjoyable time.

## **Cue words:**

*Graphic organizers, pre-reading, during-reading, after-reading, portfolio, meaningful learning, Ausubel, Novak*

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis has been made with the purpose of facilitating the process of improving the student's reading skills in the Sophomore English classes at *Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingue Rosa de Jesús Cordero* by applying the modern theory of Ausubel, based on graphic organizers. Through the usage of these tools, students can give opinions, express ideas, agreements, and disagreements together with the teacher while using English as a tool of communication in a very dynamic class, which will increase the level of reading comprehension.

For this reason, in the first Chapter, we give an explanation of how the diagnosis was made in order to know the level of reading comprehension that students possess; this was a good starting point which let us know what the needs of our students were.

In the second Chapter, we carry out a bibliographical research based on Ausubel's theory on Meaningful Learning and Graphic Organizers; the purpose is to stress on the importance of taking prior knowledge into consideration when students read an article.

In the third Chapter, we suggest strategies to introduce activities into the classroom for the three basic steps of a reading lesson plan: *pre-reading*, *during-reading* and *after-reading*. These strategies are appropriate for students who are 15 or 16 years old. However, the strategies are general, and with certain variations, can be used with other classes as well. In the portfolio, we include examples of applications to facilitate the incorporation of the above-mentioned strategies.

In the fourth Chapter, we validate our portfolio of reading strategies with teachers working in the school and students. Finally, we gather the data of the validation process and analyze its results. In this part, we show the results that



helped us to know that the strategies listed in the third Chapter are worth trying if the purpose of the teacher in a class is to improve the level of reading comprehension of his/her students.

# ***CHAPTER I***

## **DIAGNOSIS**

### **1.1 Diagnostic Test**

For teachers working in a bilingual school, getting the content of a reading assignment might not be enough. They would want students to demonstrate a deeper grasp of that article, transcript, or document. Specifically, they would want to be sure that students can handle any reading assignment by

1. decoding its particular vocabulary;
2. grasping its main idea, or overall meaning;
3. analyzing how the author built or developed that meaning;
4. evaluating the item as a source of information and new questions.

The mastering of such reading subskills is of great importance for the students in *Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingue Rosa de Jesús Cordero*, where the subject of Social Studies demands a broad domain of the reading subskills to understand the different subject matters that may come up in class. Moreover, the English teachers there think that reading skills enable students to turn their writing into a more meaningful way to express themselves and, therefore, achieve the goals of independence, comprehension, and fluency, which are necessary for them to be successful in this subject.

Therefore, in order to diagnose the reading subskills students already possess and to determine the reading skills that students still need to work on and how we teachers can help them towards their next stage of development effectively, the application of a diagnostic test based on common reading subskills was necessary: scanning and skimming, inferring the meaning of words from

context, implying the message of a given text, getting the main idea of articles, finding specific information in a text, and others that may define the skills mentioned in the first part of the present Chapter. The diagnostic test was applied in the sophomore classes, groups 1, 2, and 3, of *Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingüe Rosa de Jesús Cordero*.

Based on the items mentioned above, the diagnostic test that students took was the following:

**UNIDAD EDUCATIVA EXPERIMENTAL BILINGUE ROSA DE JESUS CORDERO**  
**“CATALINAS”**

**READING COMPREHENSION DIAGNOSTIC TEST**

**PRIMERO DE BACHILLERATO GENERAL, GROUPS 1, 2, AND 3**

**1. What is the topic of each of the following short excerpts from the works of some great poets?**

1. There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,  
There is society, where none intrudes,  
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:  
I love not man the less, but Nature more,

*by Lord Byron*

The topic is \_\_\_\_\_.

woods  
sea  
nature  
music

2. The mountain held the town as in a shadow  
I saw so much before I slept there once:  
I noticed that I missed stars in the west,  
Where its black body cut into the sky.  
Near me it seemed: I felt it like a wall  
Behind which I was sheltered from a wind.

*by Robert Frost*

The topic is \_\_\_\_\_.

mountain  
sky  
town  
wind

3. But the poor dog, in life the firmest friend,  
The first to welcome, foremost to defend,  
Whose honest heart is still his master's own,  
Who labours, fights, lives, breathes for him alone,  
Unhonour'd falls, unnoticed all his worth--  
Denied in heaven the soul he held on earth:

*by Lord Byron*

The topic is \_\_\_\_\_.

honesty  
dogs  
masters  
life

*by Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

The topic is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Behold, we know not anything;  
I can but trust that good shall fall  
At last—far off—at last, to all,  
And every winter change to spring.

seasons  
facts  
faith  
anger

**2. Use the context to help you determine the meaning of each highlighted word.  
Circle the correct answer.**

1. Your cousin claimed to be late because the doors of his house were frozen shut. Even though I have my doubts, his explanation is **plausible**. It got really cold last night. I'll just have to take his word for it.

If a statement is *plausible*, \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. you must always believe it
- b. you should never believe it
- c. it's hard to understand because it makes no sense
- d. it's believable enough to possibly be true

2. If you don't **curtail** your spending, you'll be broke in no time at all!

Which word is a synonym of "curtail"?

- a. reduce
- b. follow
- c. behind
- d. buy

3. No word must ever leak out about this military action! It has to be a **clandestine** operation in order to succeed.

Which word is a synonym of "clandestine"?

- a. family
- b. useful
- c. dangerous
- d. secret

4. Put this medicine on your arm and rub it into your skin until it's invisible. It will **inhibit** the infection's attempt to spread.

What does "inhibit" mean?

- a. live in a certain place
- b. block or slow down

- c. itch or burn
- d. help to do something important<sup>1</sup>

**3. Read about this piece of England in China; then answer the true/false questions.**

The building company Hong Kong Housing is building a new suburb in Shanghai, a city with a population of more than 15 million people. But this suburb is not like other parts of Shanghai. It is a little piece of England. The name of the new area is "English Town". The manager of Hong Kong Housing, Shi Guangsheng, says many people in this area of China want to buy an English house and live in an English town.

"This town is like Bristol or Chester. There is an English square and there are pigeons to feed like in Trafalgar Square, London. There are four English-style pubs and you can buy English beer to drink. There is a canal and you can row a boat there like in Cambridge."

Are there any cricket fields? "No, there aren't any places to play cricket because nobody in Shanghai can play this game. But there is a football stadium like those in England. And the thing we are very proud of is our shopping street. There are several shops where you can buy traditional English food like fish and chips or Christmas Pudding."

The rich Shanghai businessman can do some gardening too. For with every house in "English Town", there is an English lawn and there are long gardens with ponds and tall hedges.

But there is one problem. The houses in this part of town cost a minimum of \$400,000!

---

<sup>1</sup> RHL School "Reading Comprehension" Vol. 11, No. 10 (February 24, 2010) Internet  
<http://www.rhlschool.com/reading.htm> Access: May 6th, 2010

1. "English Town" is in a Chinese city.

True

False

2. These houses are only for English people to buy.

True

False

3. There are pigeons in all the gardens.

True

False

4. The English pubs look like pubs in Cambridge.

True

False

5. There aren't any cricket fields in the new development.

True

False

6. Shi Guangsheng feels proud about the English-style shops.

True

False

7. Most houses have a lawn.

True

False

8. The houses are cheap.

True

False<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Coghlan, Neil "English Town" ESL-Lounge student. Internet <http://www.esl-lounge.com/student/reading/2r6-english-town.php> Access: May 6th, 2010

4. Read the text and choose the most appropriate heading for each paragraph. There is one heading you won't need.

1 .....

You are sitting on a train, on a bus, in a café. You look around you. Everyone is in their own private world, staring at a grid of numbers in a newspaper. They look confused. They are deep in concentration. Suddenly they smile. They have found the solution so now they can relax, or maybe start another game. For this is an addiction, as anyone who plays Sudoku will tell you.

2.....

Number puzzles have been appearing in newspapers for over a hundred years, but the modern Sudoku puzzle was designed by Howard Garns and first published in 1979. It was then introduced in Japan in April 1984. However, it didn't become internationally known for another 20 years.

3.....

In 1997, Wayne Gold, a 59-year-old New Zealander, saw a partly completed puzzle in a Japanese bookshop. Over the next 6 years, he developed a computer program which would produce the puzzle quickly. He promoted his idea to *The Times* in the UK and they introduced it to the public on November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Several other newspapers quickly followed and by 2005 it was being called the "Rubik's Cube of the 21<sup>st</sup> century".

4.....

So, what is Sudoku and why is it so popular? Basically, you have a grid, or table, of 81 boxes (9x9). You can use the numbers 1-9 only once in each line, across and down. Within the 9x9 grid there are also nine 3x3 boxes. Again you can only use the numbers 1-4 once in each box. The games range from easy to intermediate and advanced, so you don't have to be a brilliant mathematician to succeed. The key to success is having a logical mind.

5.....

The game has in fact become so popular that the world's first live TV Sudoku show was broadcast on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005. There were nine teams of nine players with one celebrity on each team. Following this, the first world championship was held in Luca, Italy in March 2006. The winner was Jana Tylova, a 31-year-old accountant from the Czech Republic. What will the next challenge be for Sudoku fans?

- A Recent developments
- B Reaching a wider audience
- C Sudoku on the internet
- D It's everywhere
- E Early days

F            The rules<sup>3</sup>

5. **See if you can infer an implied or hidden message in each of the following selections.**

1. Turner almost wished that he hadn't listened to the radio. He went to the closet and grabbed his umbrella. He would feel silly carrying it to the bus stop on such a sunny morning.

**Which probably happened?**

- a. Turner realized that he had an unnatural fear of falling radio parts.
- b. Turner had promised himself to do something silly that morning.
- c. Turner had heard a weather forecast that predicted rain.
- d. Turner planned to trade his umbrella for a bus ride.

2. "Larry, as your boss, I must say it's been very interesting working with you," Miss Valdez said. "However, it seems that our company's needs and your performance style are not well matched. Therefore, it makes me very sad to have to ask you to resign your position effective today."

**What was Miss Valdez telling Larry?**

- a. She would feel really bad if he decided to quit.
- b. He was being fired.
- c. He was getting a raise in pay.
- d. She really enjoyed having him in the office.

3. No, Honey, I don't want you to spend a lot of money on my birthday present. Just having you for a husband is the only gift I need. In fact, I'll just drive my old rusty bucket of bolts down to the mall and buy myself a little present. And if the poor old car doesn't break down, I'll be back soon.

**What is the message?**

- a. I don't want a gift.
- b. Buy me a new car.
- c. The mall is fun.
- d. I'll carry a bucket for you.

4. Bill and Jessica were almost done taking turns choosing the players for their teams. It was Jessica's turn to choose, and only Kurt was left. Jessica said, "Kurt."

**We can infer that \_\_\_\_\_**

---

<sup>3</sup> Ackroyd, Sara, Budden, Joanna. English in Mind 4, Resource Pack. Ed. Cambridge University Press, 2007. 71p



- a. Kurt is not a very good player.
- b. Jessica was pleased to have Kurt on her team.
- c. Kurt was the best player on either team.
- d. Jessica was inconsiderate of Kurt's feelings.

**6. Read the sentence; choose the answer.**

1. The tiger's **roar** could be heard in villages far away.  
What does roar probably mean?

- A) food a tiger eats
- B) a tiger's dream
- C) a tiger's ear
- D) a sound a tiger makes

2. The thought of eating a rat is **abhorrent** to most people.  
What does abhorrent probably mean?

- A) fun, lively
- B) horrible, repugnant
- C) delicious, tasty
- D) sweet, sugary

3. My **absent-minded** teacher loses his keys, his book and his chalk almost every day!  
What does it mean to be absent-minded?

- A) be hateful
- B) not pay attention
- C) be intelligent
- D) not like someone

4. You can trust the salesmen at that store because they always conduct business in an **aboveboard** manner.  
What does aboveboard probably mean?

- A) honestly, openly
- B) sneaky, dishonest
- C) horrible, repugnant
- D) strange, unusual

5. Petra has so many friends because she is a **gregarious** person.  
What does gregarious probably mean?

- A) introverted, self-contained
- B) shy, quiet
- C) friendly, outgoing
- D) rude, hostile

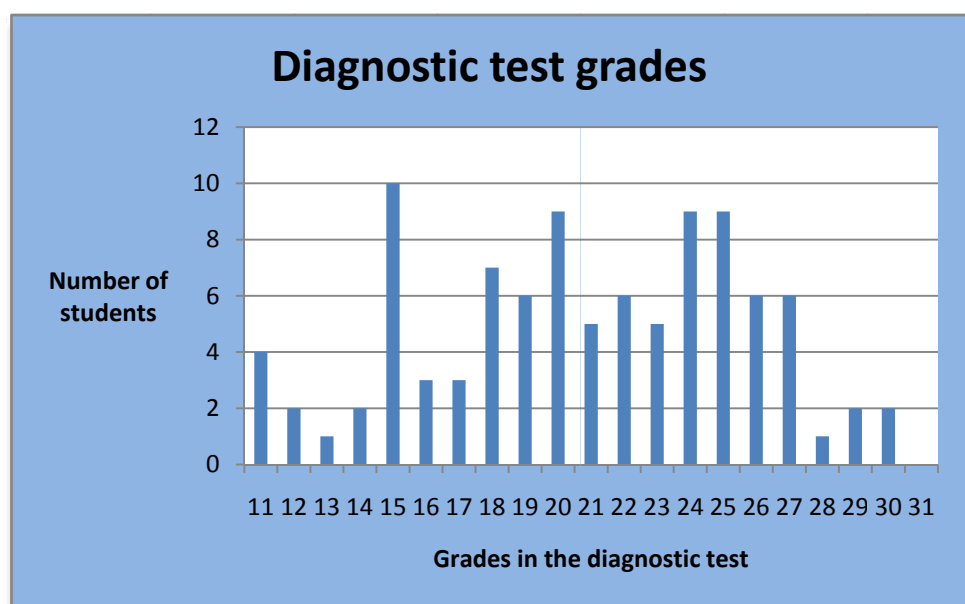
6. The lovely **egret** is in danger of extinction because clothing manufacturers use their long, beautiful tail feathers to make ladies' hats. What is an egret?

- A) a small child
- B) a type of food

C) a sound a tiger makes D) a type of bird <sup>4</sup>

## 1.2 Results of the Diagnostic Test

The following chart shows the results that students got in their reading diagnostic test:



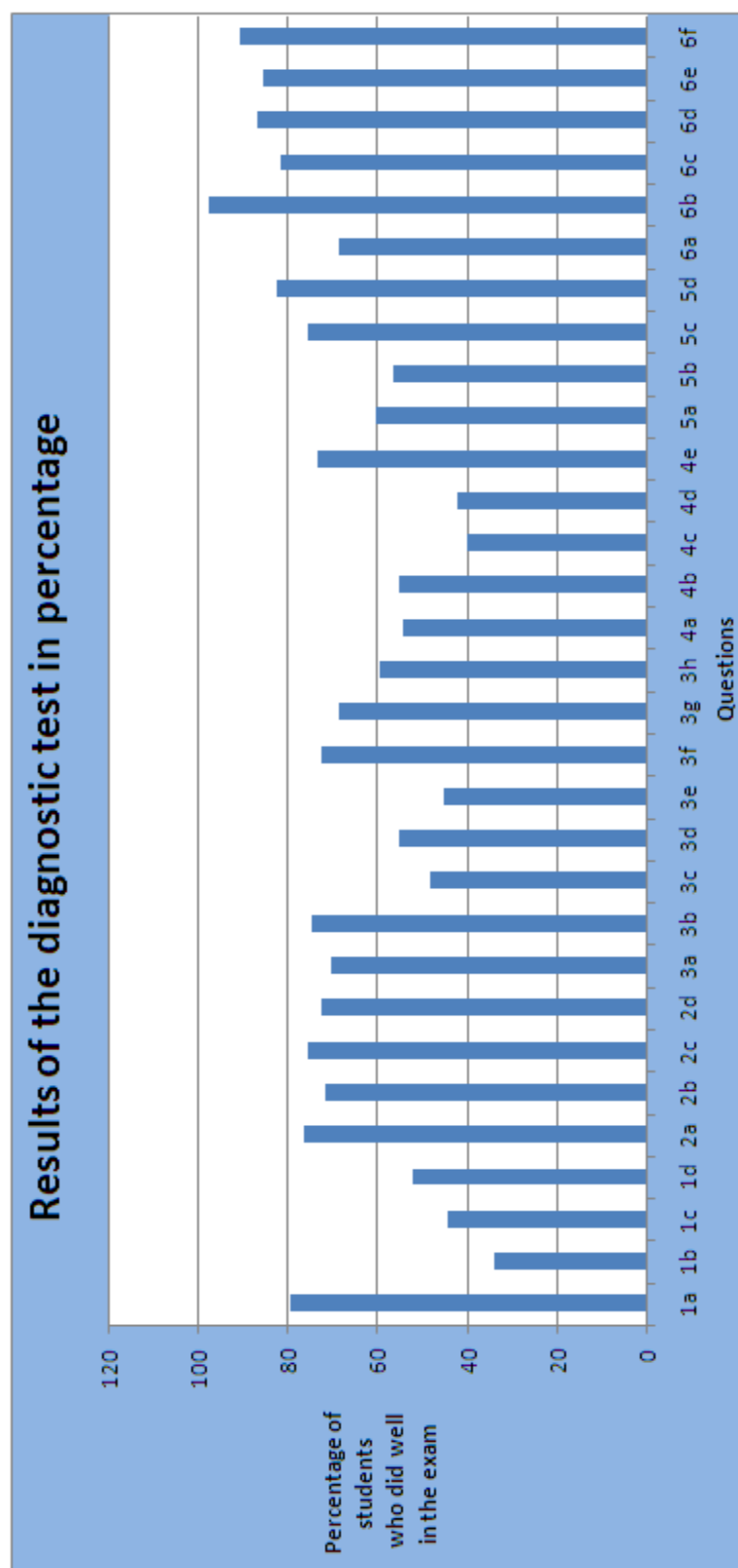
*Graphic 1*

The number of students who took the diagnostic test was 99 in total. From them, only 2 students got 30 in the test, whereas 10 students got 15, being this last data the highest; it shows that, in general, most of the students got half the average of an expected score for a bilingual school, which demonstrates that they haven't developed sufficiently their reading skills.

Let's now take a look at the chart below and the results it shows.

---

<sup>4</sup> Mastin Mallory, Kate "Guessing Vocabulary in Context 1." English-Zone.com. Internet <http://www.english-zone.com/vocab/vic01.html> Access: May 6th, 2010



Graphic 2

The questions in which students mostly failed are 1b, 1c, 1d; 3a, 3c, 3d, 3e; 4a, 4c, and 4d.

### **1.3 Analysis of the Reading Skills Students Already Possess**

To analyze the reading skills students possess, it is important to describe what reading skills they are.

In general, reading has two types of elements involved: mechanics and comprehension. It is said that reading begins at birth; the focus of instruction from preschool through third grade is reading mechanics, and reading comprehension is the center from the third grade into early adulthood.

Reading mechanics and comprehension include various skill levels that are classically taught in a progressive way.

#### **Mechanic Skills**

Skill levels involved in reading mechanics include pre-reading, decoding, and fluency.

Pre-reading skills are built upon a person's growing range of experiences that help to develop awareness and appreciation of printed words, which means that an individual should be aware of words wherever they appear. For example, on grocery labels, household objects, billboards, etc, people can acquire a more sophisticated understanding of written language by learning:

- the alphabet, including the names, sounds, and shapes of letters, and how to write them;

- that English has a left to right directionality;
- that words are made up of letters and syllables;
- that words are made up of sound elements or phonemes, and
- by learning the practical application of the relationship between sounds and their representative letters by counting the sounds in a word.

*Decoding* is the process of taking a written word to a spoken word. An individual who has developed adequate decoding skills can begin to acquire fluency when reading no longer requires a conscious, premeditated effort. When fluent reading becomes automatic and consists of word recognition rather than sounding out and combining syllables, we can say that decoding has been well practiced.

Teaching decoding provides students with the keys to release new words. Decoding is a part of the mechanical element of reading.

Fluency, on the other hand, is reading quickly, accurately, and with expression.

## **Comprehension Skills**

Once good mechanical skills have been established, individuals usually shift their attention to reading comprehension, which, like mechanical skills, develops from fundamental to more advanced levels. Therefore, it has traditionally been helpful for students to learn to read for factual information before they begin to compare and evaluate the information they read and, therefore, develop analysis and synthesis.

Reading for factual information would be reading a sequence of events and the details of a story. On the other hand, learning to compare and evaluate information from different sources requires the reader to be able to separate the main ideas from the supporting details of a text. This level of critical

reading allows the reader to apply techniques like comparing and contrasting what was read in order to solve and verify statements. These skills would allow the reader to draw important conclusions and to make reasonable inferences from the information contained in the text.

Once the above has been explained, this project will analyze the reading skills that are based on the information already given to make inferences or wrap up conclusions.

In the general teacher's meetings in school, teachers report that students possess a broad domain of reading fluency when reading aloud; that is, students have good pronunciation and speed and make correct pausing when a punctuation mark comes up in a text; students can read very fluently in English. In general, the speed or rate of reading, as well as the ability to read materials with expression, is quite good among students. This is a very important key in the process of developing the current thesis, as students' strength in mechanical reading as fluency seems to be rapid, smooth, and almost effortless to them. Therefore, they will focus their attention on understanding the text they are reading rather than on figuring out words that may not even define the text itself.

Regarding reading comprehension, according to the results shown before, they didn't seem to have had problems with solving any part of questions 2 and 6.

Questions 2 and 6 deal with determining the meanings of words using the context to do it. Students didn't seem to have any problems with inferring the meaning of new vocabulary from context. This ability to infer the meaning of vocabulary can be due to the fact that they have the subject Social Studies, taught in English, as a part of their curriculum. Therefore, students will be constantly dealing with new situations that demand the

mastering of new vocabulary and grammar structures. As Social Studies teachers mainly use a reading approach to teach this subject, students might have developed the skill to infer the meaning of words from context almost automatically to keep up with the classes. That is, they prefer to understand an unknown word in a sentence rather than memorize its definition.

Moreover, when this group of students was in elementary school, they had Science as well as Social Studies, so students may have acquired a wide range of words related to several subjects, so their vocabulary has been very-well expanded. Probably they didn't know the word asked, but they were very familiar with the words used in the context of the text, so they could make a very good usage of them to infer the meaning of the word being asked.

On the other hand, teachers have to emphasize on the importance of vocabulary, considering it represents a good percentage of a grade in quizzes and tests; students have to face different questions and evaluating strategies through their school years, so they are aware of the importance of acquiring vocabulary, probably only by memorization, to improve not only their level of English, which was surely reached, but also to improve their grades as well as their general knowledge. The only problem that they might face in their near future if they only study this "vocabulary" by rote learning is that they will forget it. However, one can't deny the fact that having students with a wide range of vocabulary, even if it was only rote learned, is beneficial in general to develop the rest of the reading skills.

## **1.4 Determination of the Reading Skill Areas to Be Developed**

As shown in the diagnostic exam, questions 1 and 4 seemed to have caused a great difficulty to students. These questions mainly ask about finding the main idea of different kinds of articles using different diagnostic questions to determine the level students possess to identify the real message of a text. Question 1 is a multiple-choice exercise in which students have to recognize the topic of a passage, whereas in question 4 students have to choose an appropriate heading for each paragraph of an article. Therefore, to do this exercise, students have to know what the paragraph is about to get the right heading for each paragraph. They don't only need to know what the text is about (the main idea) but also what the author wants readers to understand across the whole text, not just within sections or lines of it. Maybe students need to learn how to use details in a text to find what the author is trying to say and later how to group them in order to make a good "guess."

Question 3 deals with finding specific information in a text. In this exercise students were asked objective questions which they had to answer by giving a true or false response. The answers to these questions are found in the text, but students got confused with the way the question was asked and the way they found the information within the text, so the purpose of this question was to determine how good students are for finding specific information. If students are good at it, then they are good at scanning as they need to know exactly what they are looking for (it has to be very clear to themselves) trying at the same time to understand what information the author wants to convey by reading only relevant parts of the text that will be necessary for them to find the information for such question.



Question 5 deals with implying the message of a given text. Students had to deal with a multiple-choice exercise. According to the results, it was hard for them to suggest what message the author was trying to communicate if it wasn't clearly stated. Probably, students get confused with the terms "infer" and "imply." The term *implying* relates to putting the suggestion offered by **the author** into the message, while *inferring* means taking the suggestion of the author out of the message by **the reader**.

"Inferring is a strategy used before, during and after reading. Predicting is a part of inferring. Inferences need to be based on references in the text and then mixed with background knowledge. Students need to be taught how to infer what words mean, the setting(s) of the story, the answers to the questions the reader doesn't understand, what pronouns refer to, how to use text to understand characters, fact from opinion, explanations for events, and the underlying message from the author. Good readers draw inferences from text. Proficient readers use their prior knowledge of the information in the text to draw conclusions, make critical judgments, and form unique interpretations from text. Inference may occur in the form of conclusions, predictions, or new ideas."<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, inferring constitutes a great skill to be developed among the students and a task that won't be easy to teach.

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<sup>5</sup> Haag, Karen. "Like To Read.com" WRESA's Literacy Institute. Internet. <http://www.liketoread.com/index.php> Access: July 6th, 2010.

# ***CHAPTER II***

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 What is Reading Comprehension?**

Ideas of reading comprehension have changed dramatically over the decades. Even the theories of learning have changed significantly during the 20th century. It has moved from a behavioral perspective to a holistic or interactive approach, and continues to form our thinking about reading comprehension today. Professionals believe that reading is considered as a cognitive and socially constructed task that goes beyond understanding the words on a page. In the past, reading was considered as a not moving activity. Meaning was included in the text, and the reader's job was to understand what was being transmitted by the words on the text. Current research views reading as a more dynamic procedure in which the reader constructs meaning based on information he/she gathers from the text. A reading expert defines reading comprehension as a holistic process of constructing meaning from written text through the relation of:

- (1) the facts the reader brings to the text, i.e., word recognition ability, world knowledge, and knowledge of linguistic conventions;
- (2) the reader's interpretation of the words that the writer used in constructing the text; and
- (3) the situation in which the text is read.

### **2.1.1 Understanding the Reader's Role in the Comprehension Process**

Since reading is an interactive process that is active and constantly changing, each new task or assignment will alter the learning process, and challenge the reader to be active in his/ her approach to the text. Developing readers are often challenged with the changing nature of reading tasks. They may also lack some of the strategies that expert readers use as they read. Because of this, students should be encouraged to take an active role in their learning process. Similarly, teachers play an important role in preparing students for the task and can help them become aware of the reading characteristics they bring to the task.

### **2.1.2 Educational Applications**

Ausubel says that rote learning makes a distinction between rote and meaningful learning, which is important for teaching higher order thinking. Rote learning occurs when the learner memorizes information in an arbitrary fashion. The knowledge of information is stored in an isolated compartment and is not integrated into the person's larger cognitive structure. Because rote learning is not trustful to remember concepts, it is more easily forgotten. Formal education is filled with examples of rote learning. Did you ever memorize the conjugation of Spanish verbs? If the task was treated as an end-in-itself rather than as a means to greater conversational fluency, then it was rote learning.

Meaningful learning, on the other hand, is a part and parcel of higher order thinking. Such thinking takes place when we understand the interrelationship between two or more ideas, old and new. This is one of the first pre-requisites for meaningful learning. Ausubel and Robinson contend that the material presented to the students should be capable of being related in some 'sensible' matter. The new information must be fitted into a larger pattern or whole.

Second, students must possess related ideas to which the new idea can be related. Students must already have appropriate knowledge of the concepts in their cognitive structure. Finally, they must actually challenge to relate, in some sensible way, the new ideas to those which they currently possess. If any of these conditions are missing, the end result will be rote learning.

The way Ausubel describes his learning theory is that the ideas are given and they are linked together in an order. The human mind follows logical rules for organizing information into its respective categories. Mind, metaphorically, is like a Chinese puzzle box. All the smaller boxes, ideas, and concepts are hidden inside larger boxes. The specific relation between two concepts is the central idea running through the whole of Ausubel's learning theory. The big boxes in the mental pyramid add up the small boxes. This relation between the two concepts constitutes the general categories around which we organize our thinking. New concepts allow people to understand new information into our cognitive structure.

Teaching and learning, therefore, are largely matters of building cognitive structures to hold new information. By placing information into its proper box, we are better able to retain it for future use. Similarly, forgetting occurs when the smaller boxes (being made of less durable cognitive stuff) fall apart and become incorporated into the larger boxes.

As we have seen, Ausubel places emphasis on the students' cognitive structure in the acquisition of new information. Present experience is always fitted into what they already know. This already existing cognitive structure is the principal factor influencing the learning and retention of meaningful new material. A cognitive structure that is clear and well organized facilitates the learning and retention of new information. A cognitive structure that is confusing inhibits learning. Therefore, by strengthening the cognitive structure,

retention learning can be enhanced. Putting the mind in order is one of the principal objectives of all education. Having a clear and well organized cognitive structure is the most significant independent variable influencing the students' capacity for acquiring new knowledge.

To see how knowledge is organized hierarchically, Ausubel and Robinson's theory of learning assumes the existence of a hierarchical structure of knowledge. Fields of investigation are organized like pyramids, in which the most general ideas go to the top and more particular ideas and specific details go under them. The most inclusive ideas, those located at the top of the pyramid, are the dominant and most permanent elements in the hierarchy. They possess a longer life that covers in memory than do particular facts or specific details, which fall at the base of the pyramid. This learning process occurs as the potentially meaningful material enters the cognitive area and interacts with the other concepts that you already possess in your mind, and is appropriately subsumed under a relevant and more inclusive system. Therefore, new information is organized under higher level concepts already existing in the learner's mind.

Ausubel's learning theory also talks about "assimilation" or subsuming concepts. When a new idea enters consciousness, it is processed and classified under one or more of the inclusive concepts already existing in the person's cognitive structure; this new meaningful material becomes included into cognitive structure in so far as it is subsumable under relevant existing concepts. This assimilation provides a basic structure around which information is organized. They are the intellectual structures that are holding the system together. This assimilation can be described as facilitation of both learning and retention. The major concepts in cognitive structure serve as a foundation for new information. The availability of attaching ideas facilitates meaningful learning.

If the idea or scaffolding is clear, stable, and well organized, it is Ausubel's idea that it would be practical to provide better attaching for new learning and retention than if it is unclear, unstable, and poorly organized. The cognitive stability provided by attaching ideas helps to explain why meaningful learning is retained longer than rote learning. Meaningful learning is anchored; rote learning is not.

Ausubel thinks that another important point is advance organizers. Organizers are not to be confused with initial comments or brief overviews, which are typically written at the same level of abstraction, generality, and inclusiveness as the learning material. Organizers are abstract ideas presented in advance of the lesson. They represent a higher level of abstraction, generality, and inclusiveness than the new material. Ausubel believes organizers can be used to assist learners in assimilating new information. Organizers help to link the gap between what is already known and what is to be learned. The learning and retention of unfamiliar but meaningful verbal material can be facilitated by the advance introduction of relevant subsuming concepts. Organizers are useful when learners do not already possess the relevant concepts needed in order to integrate new information into their cognitive systems.

Ausubel thinks good students (those who already possess clear and well organized knowledge) profit very little from the use of organizers. This is because their minds are already programmed with anchoring ideas. Slow learners, on the other hand, are the ones who benefit the most from the use of organizers. Such students require additional assistance in learning how to structure their thinking.

Ausubel's research disclosed another interesting aspect of using organizers. Advance organizers are more useful when working with factual material than they are when dealing with abstractions. If a reader already possesses relevant

accurate concepts, he/ she will use them in assimilating new material. When readers do not possess such concepts, there is little reason to believe advance organizers can be used to take their place.

Retention is influenced by three factors:

- (a) The accessibility of relevant subsuming concepts at an appropriate level of inclusiveness;
- (b) The stability and clarity of these concepts; and
- (c) Their discriminability from the learning task.

Learners who possess well organized cognitive structures tend to retain information efficiently. However, learners who have poorly organized cognitive systems tend to forget information rapidly. One way of improving retention is to introduce appropriate subsumers prior to presenting the new lesson.

Why do people forget information? Ausubel's answer is clearly explained in his theory of subsumption. Just as subsumption explains how information is retained, so it also explains why forgetting occurs. New information is stored when it becomes anchored to a larger subsuming concept. Regularly, this information is forgotten as it becomes more and more absorbed into its cognitive host.

Forgetting is complete when the information can no longer be separated from its subsuming concept. Forgetting is complete, says Ausubel, when the new information is reduced to the least common denominator capable of representing it; in other words, to the anchoring idea itself.

To find the "hook" to pull students into reading an assigned material and help develop skills to a better understanding of it, according to Ausubel, would be a

tool that links what students already know about the subject with what they will learn to expand their knowledge in a meaningful way. This tool could be a graphic organizer.

According to Ausubel's theory, concept mapping is a technique that can help students retain information as they help to represent knowledge in graphics. Knowledge graphs are networks of concepts. Therefore, networks consist of points that link and emphasize relevant information. These knowledge maps are the greatest tool to find the "hook" to pull students into reading the assigned text. The right hook will connect what students already know about the subject, which is sometimes substantially different from what teachers expect, and encourage them to expand that knowledge, so that they can tackle the subject more easily.

## **2.2 Concept Mapping**

“A graphic organizer is an instructional tool used to illustrate a student or class's prior knowledge about a topic or section of text.”<sup>6</sup> Graphic organizers help students construct meaning. These types of visuals or maps show how ideas and information in a reading passage are related to one another and to previous knowledge a learner has assimilated previously whether in class or at home. The usage of a graphic organizer involves assigning hierarchical relationships of information, beginning with broad categories and branching them into related concepts into lower levels.

All connections have to be logical and new knowledge can be assimilated in relation to the previous knowledge that the students may have already acquired

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<sup>6</sup> “Graphic Organisers” North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (1988) Internet: <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/students/learning/lr1grorg.htm> Access: June 10th, 2010



by forming sublevels in a hierarchy. Readers must learn how to use the printed words to build prior knowledge and relate concepts to each other.

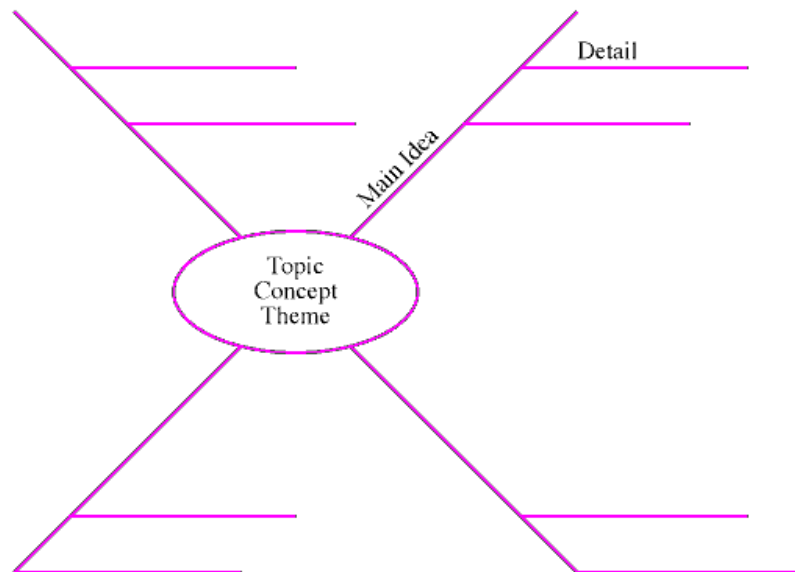
A teacher must have surely watched his or her students quickly lose interest as they read in class. Many times their eyes are staring at the page but the teacher isn't able to realize if they actually understand what his or her students are reading. The usage of graphic organizers is an active reading process that stimulates readers to think more deeply about the ideas in the text because they must figure out relationships between ideas and the hierarchy of their organization. "The drawing, connecting, writing, and the visual aspects as a whole in a process of organizing, in conjunction with the thought process involved in organizing the map reinforce and deepen comprehension"<sup>7</sup>. However, students who are used to being given information straight by their teachers can be slow to the challenge in the use of these visual maps.

There are several types of graphic organizers. Some of the most commonly used graphic organizers are mentioned below; they will be discussed in detail later in this thesis though. However, we will describe them briefly as follows.

**2.2.1 Spider Map:** This is used to describe a central idea of a thing, a process, a concept, or a proposition. It responds to questions such as "What is the central idea?," "What are its attributes?," "What are its functions?"

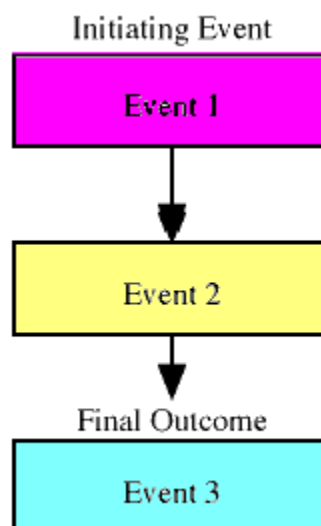
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<sup>7</sup> Lanzing, Jan "The Concept Mapping Homepage" Internet:  
[http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm\\_home.htm](http://users.edte.utwente.nl/lanzing/cm_home.htm) Access: June 12th, 2010



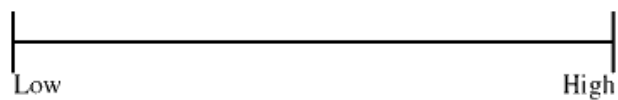
*Graphic 3*

**2.2.2 Series of Events Chain:** This is used to describe the stages of cycles, procedures, or sequences of events or outcomes. It responds to the questions: “What is the object, procedure, or initiating event?,” “What are the stages or steps?,” “How do they lead to one another?,” “What is the final outcome?,” etc.



*Graphic 4*

**2.2.3 Continuum Scale:** This is used to represent time lines of historical events, degrees of something, relate meaning of words, ratings of degrees in meaning of words. It responds to questions, such as: “What is being scaled?,” “What are the end points?,” “In what percentage are the words different from each other?,” etc.



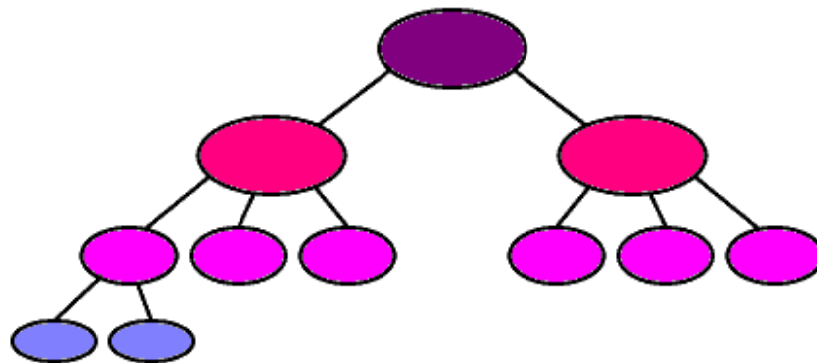
*Graphic 5*

**2.2.4 Compare/Contrast Matrix:** This is used to show similarities and differences between different matters. It responds to questions such as: “What things are being compared?,” “How are they similar?,” “How are they different?,” etc.

	Name 1	Name 2
Attribute 1		
Attribute 2		
Attribute 3		

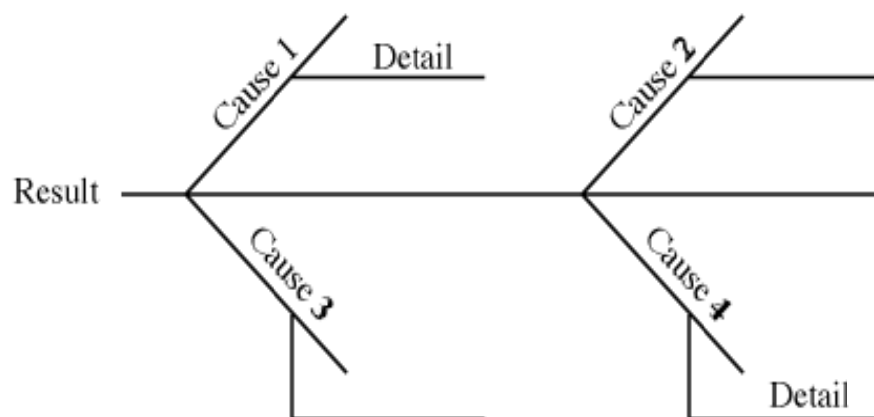
*Graphic 6*

**2.2.5 Network Tree:** This is used to show causal information, hierarchy, and branching processes. It responds to questions such as: “What is at the top of the hierarchy?,” “What are the subordinate categories?,” “How are they related to each other?,” etc.



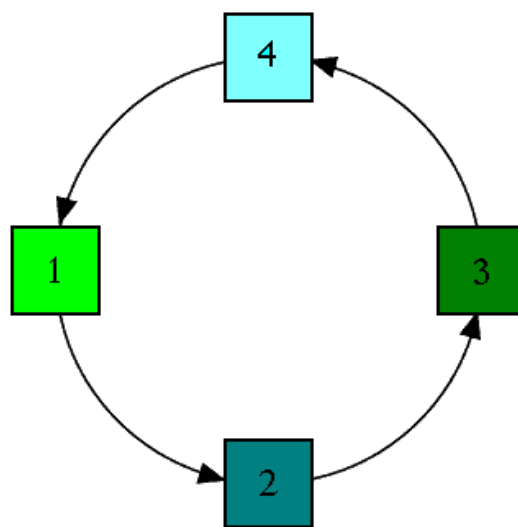
*Graphic 7*

**2.2.6 Fishbone Map:** This is used to show the causes of different events or a complex phenomenon. It responds to questions, such as: “What are the factors that cause X?,” “How do they interrelate?,” “Are the factors that cause X the same that cause X to persist?,” etc.



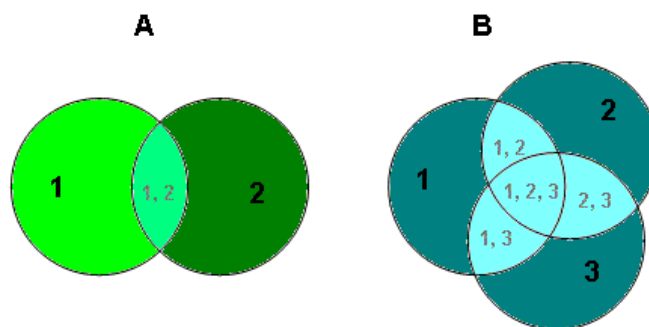
*Graphic 8*

**2.2.7 Cycle:** This is used to show how a series of events interact to produce a set of results again and again. It answers questions such as “What are the critical events in the cycle?,” “How are they related to each other?,” “In what ways are they self-reinforcing?”



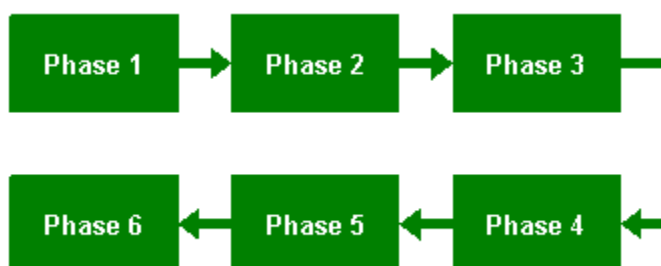
*Graphic 9*

**2.2.8 Venn Diagram:** Venn diagrams are very helpful for making comparisons. Similarities are shown in the overlapping area and differences are shown in the areas that do not overlap.



*Graphic 10*

**2.2.9 Flow Diagram:** They sequence ideas, procedures, or events. They can represent a timeline or final action plan.



*Graphic 11*

**2.2.10 K-W-L-H:** The K-W-L-H organizer provides students with a framework to explore their prior knowledge on a topic and consider what they would like to know and learn.

**K** – stands for helping students recall what they **KNOW** about the subject.

**W** – stands for helping students determine what they **WANT** to learn.

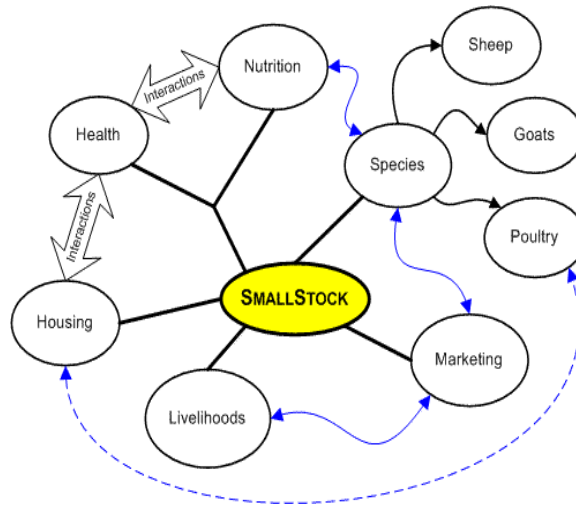
**L** – stands for helping students identify and reflect upon what they have **LEARNT** at the end of a topic or activity.

**H** – stands for **HOW** we learnt it and aids metacognition by assisting students to reflect upon what they have learnt and how they have learnt it.

K-W-L-H			
What we Know	What we want to Find Out	What we learned	How did we learn it

*Graphic 12*

**2.2.11 Mind Maps:** They are an effective method of note-taking and useful for the generation of ideas by associations. For building up a mind map, one starts in the center of the page with the main idea and works in all directions, producing a growing and organized structure composed of key words and key images. It usually responds to questions such as “How is it related to X?” and “What is its organization?” Because of the large amounts of association involved, they can be very creative, tending to generate new ideas and associations that have not been thought of before.



*Graphic 13*

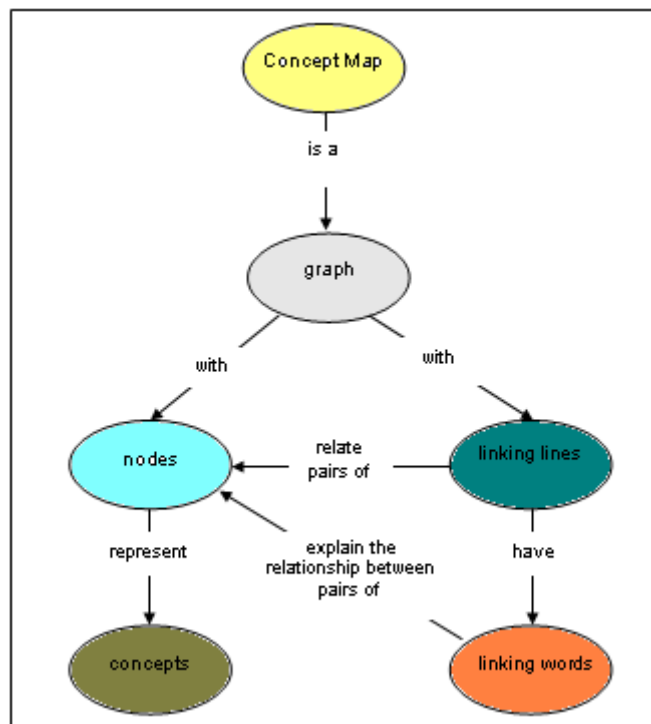
**2.2.12 Concept mapping:** It was developed by Prof. Joseph D. Novak at Cornell University in the 1960s. It includes concepts, usually enclosed in circles or boxes of any type, and relationships between concepts, indicated by a connecting line that links two concepts. Words on the line are referred to as linking words or “cross-links” that specify the relationship between two or more concepts. These cross-links are relationships between concepts or ideas in different parts of the concept map. They help the student visualize how the information represented in different parts of the map is related to each other. Regarding the creation of meaningful learning and the development of reading skills, these cross-links mark the difference. Cross-links can be a word or a symbol such as + or -, propositions which can themselves contain two or more concepts connected using other cross-links as well or phrases to form a meaningful statement.

### **Mind maps vs. Concept Maps**

It is best to construct concept maps with reference to some particular question we seek to answer, which has been called a focus question. This



question guides the reader to find information focused on a specific area. This focus question should therefore be given before the student reads the text.



*Graphic 14*

The difference between mind maps and concept maps can be summed up as follows: A mind map helps a student create. It is centered on a single topic with all sub-topics branching from it. It is great for organizing thinking around a central idea or problem. This is a great technique to outline a chapter of a book, for instance. On the other hand, concept maps let students draw connections between a wide variety of ideas. Concept maps are great when you wish to show the connections of the ideas being mapped. It lets a student jump from one topic to another in many different directions as it deals not only with one single topic, but many. A mind map can be represented as a tree, while a concept map may need a more complex representation.

For a better understanding of concept maps, it is necessary to define the word “concept”, which “is a perceived regularity in events or objects, or records of events of specific, less general concepts arranged hierarchically.”<sup>8</sup> Once it has been explained, there are two features of concept maps that are important: the hierarchical structure and the usage of cross-links, which usually designate a new level in the concept map.

The importance of concept maps is immense if the goal of a teacher is to improve the students’ reading skill. Ausubel made a very important distinction between meaningful learning and rote learning. According to Ausubel, meaningful learning requires three conditions:

1. The material to be learned must be conceptually clear and presented with language and examples relatable to the student’s prior knowledge. In order to accomplish with this requirement, concept maps can be helpful to identify general concepts that the learner already possesses prior to acquiring the new concepts.
2. The learner must possess relevant prior knowledge. A teacher can get plenty of feedback in this matter by using a concept map or a graphic organizer.
3. The learner must choose to learn meaningfully. The teacher must motivate his/her students to learn by incorporating new meanings relating them to previous ones and not simply memorizing concept

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<sup>8</sup>Novak, J.D.& Cañas, Alberto J. “ The Theory Underlying Concept Maps and How to Construct and Use Them.” Technical Report IHMC Cmap Tools (01-2006 Rev 01-2008) Internet:  
<http://cmap.ihmc.us/Publications/ResearchPapers/TheoryUnderlyingConceptMaps.pdf>  
Access: June 13, 2010

definitions. A teacher can influence over this matter indirectly by using several strategies in class, such as the development of concept maps in class and in evaluation time, when the quiz or test may include questions that encourage learners to relate ideas they possess with new ones.

It is important to recognize that because individuals vary in the quantity and quality of knowledge they possess, and in the strength of motivation to seek ways to incorporate new knowledge, teachers play a great role by making usage of the “focus questions” while reading a text.

## **2.3 Importance of Reading**

### **What is Reading?**

“Reading is making meaning from print. It requires that we:

- Identify the words in print – a process called word recognition
- Construct an understanding from them – a process called comprehension
- Coordinate identifying words and making meaning so that reading is automatic and accurate – an achievement called fluency”<sup>9</sup>

As the definition above expresses, reading is not a straightforward process; instead, it is very complex, as the reader doesn't have to simply take the words out of the paper, but to give a meaning from them. It is more like a problem-solving process in which the reader has to make sense of an article not only from the sentences it contains, but also from the ideas that the text calls forth. Therefore, good readers can understand the individual sentences and the organizational structure of a piece of a text very easily. Also, they can

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<sup>9</sup> Leipzig, D. H. “What is Reading?” WETA Washington D.C. (2010) Internet: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/352> Access: July 6th, 2010

comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and infer a hidden message in the text. They can determine the meaning of many of the unfamiliar words from the context. Seen this way, recent researches have proved that students who are good at reading are more likely to do better at school than students that are a weaker readers. Reading is like giving the brain food for the thought.

A few years ago, when television wasn't available to everybody, people used to travel to so many places thanks to the imagination developed by reading. It was considered as the only leisure activity. People spent hours and hours reading at different times of the day, so at this time they were more creative; it wouldn't surprise anyone how the community were peaceful and original at the time of solving problems. They may have solved many problems by just speaking clearly and without offending anyone. This is the result of having read so much. Reading represents an approach to improve vocabulary and therefore word power. Just a few things have less impact on listening, writing, and speaking than the depth of vocabulary knowledge. It is said that a person is articulate when she or he uses the most accurate word to express a concept, whether it is about a simple description of a person or a more complex task. A person's fluency in a language and, consequently, communication skills are improved by word power which is acquired by reading. Hence, reading supports the development of overall proficiency and provides access to crucial information in every moment of one's life. Having a large vocabulary is not only impressive but also useful when one wants to get the message across. Many different words have the same meaning, that is, they have synonyms; therefore, reading helps a person to improve his or her vocabulary whether by inferring words or by looking them up in dictionaries. It is proven that in this technological society, the demands for higher levels of literacy and, beyond that, good reading skills, are creating unfavorable consequences for those who have shortcomings in this matter.

Furthermore, reading increases the students' exposure to English; the quality of exposure to English that learners receive is seen as an important trigger to their potential to acquire new forms of language. At this point, it is important to recall that the English class students have in school is for most of them the only time they have to learn English, so it is important to increase the “exposure gap” they have in class to the maximum. Therefore, reading offers this space to be exploited, especially if the material to be read is authentic. Thanks to this skill, students may be offered the potential for reinforcing the language learned in the classroom as they will have a controlled grammatical practice and will be provided with regular and sufficient repetition of new language forms or structures. Consequently, students will receive the necessary strengthening of language to make sure that the new contributions learned in class are retained and available for spoken and written production.

Moreover, reading helps to build confidence among students. Much classroom reading work has traditionally focused on presenting grammatical points. However, students, when entering to universities all over the world, will require reading for academic purposes, and therefore will need training in reading skills and strategies for reading longer texts to understand them, so by helping students to improve their reading skills at school will help them gain confidence and be successful, specially if they know that they can count on this advantage over the others in their class.

Most importantly, reading facilitates the development of prediction skills as it involves the exploitation of background knowledge or prior knowledge, which will work out as the platform for readers to predict the content of a text while reading. When a student reads, this platform is activated and helps him/her to decode and interpret the message far beyond the printed words while trying to work out what the end of that text would be based on his/her knowledge explicitly taught in class or learned by everyday life experience.

Likewise, reading can lead a student not only to improve his/her writing skill, but to become more fluent in it. Different research all over the world has shown the positive effect of reading on writing skills by exposing the student to new writing styles. Reading helps to absorb new ideas. If our students cannot read clearly and analyze what they read and then write effectively about what they have read, then they may never do justice to their talents and their potential. Writers have won Nobel Prizes without finishing high school, so what was their secret? Reading. In an age overwhelmed by information, a student who can read, comprehend, and write organizing information into knowledge would make the difference among students who can succeed and those who can't.

Having said the above, the only thing left to say is that learning how to improve the reading skills is not just an option; it is a necessity.

The acquisition of reading skills, however, is never easy and students need not only consistent practice to become good readers, but also tools that would help them overcome the problems they would be facing if they didn't improve their reading skill. Motivation is a key word in the process of improving reading skills; this term is sometimes considered a hot topic among teachers, as motivation is not static, rather it varies from task to task and day to day depending on the different activities that would be carried out in class.

## **2.4 Reading Strategies**

The word *strategy* refers to a plan of action intended to accomplish a particular goal. In this case the goal would be to improve reading.

Good reading strategies help a student to read in a more efficient way. By using them, a student can get the maximum benefit from reading with the minimum effort. However, before checking reading strategies, it is necessary to consider the different approaches to reading as not all the students have the

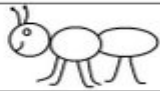




same grade of knowledge retention. A basic understanding of the reading approaches is essential before developing any strategies of materials to teach reading. The approaches are grouped as follows:

### 2.4.1 Phonics

This is the most elementary approach to reading. It is based on letters and sounds. It is based on the fact of children learning the alphabet first. They learn the letters and the sounds they make. Once they have learnt the letter sounds, they will begin to blend two letters together to make simple words, then three letters, then four, and so forth.

**a-t   i-t   o-n   i-f   b-e   m-e   n-o   w-e   i-n   h-e**  
**c-a-t   s-a-t   m-a-t   f-a-t   p-a-t   r-a-t   c-a-r   g-o-d   m-e-n**  
**f-l-a-t   p-l-a-t   t-h-a-t   s-p-i-t   g-r-i-t   s-l-i-t**

This method is basically used in elementary school. Charts like the following are a good example of this method:

<b>ANT</b>	
<b>BAT</b>	
<b>BED</b>	
<b>BOY</b>	
<b>CAT</b>	

*Graphic 15*

Or using phonetic symbols such as:

ɪ READ	ɪ SIT	ʊ BOOK	u: TOO	ɪə HERE	eɪ DAY	John & Sarah Free Materials 1996	
e MEN	ə AMERICA	ɜ: WORD	ɔ: SORT	ʊə TOUR	ɔɪ BOY	əʊ GO	
æ CAT	ʌ BUT	ɑ: PART	ɒ NOT	eə WEAR	aɪ MY	aʊ NOW	
p PIG	b BED	t TIME	d DO	tʃ CHURCH	dʒ JUDGE	k KILO	g GO
f FIVE	v VERY	θ THINK	ð THE	s SIX	z ZOO	ʃ SHORT	ʒ CASUAL
m MILK	n NO	ŋ SING	h HELLO	l LIVE	r READ	w WINDOW	j YES

Graphic 16

It is important to say that, because of the complexity of written English, there is a strong controversy on whether English phonics should or should not be used in teaching beginning reading because at the age of 5 or 6, in which students are in their first steps towards the process of reading and writing, their mother tongue may bring up a huge interference in the process of learning to read in English.

#### 2.4.2 Words and phrases

Also known as “whole language approach,” it has its basis in a range of theories of learning related to holism, which is based upon the belief that it is not possible to understand learning of any kind by only taking small parts of the learning process, but by taking the whole process: *the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*. It is a method to teach reading by introducing words to children as whole units without analyzing their sub-word parts, contrary to the phonics approach to reading.



“This approach is based on words (concepts) and phrases, and makes a lot of use of flash cards and pictures”<sup>10</sup>.

The flash card, however, consists not only of a picture, but also of a whole sentence included in it.



“Twilight coming soon to theaters”

*Graphic 17*

### **2.4.3 Whole Sentences**

The whole sentence approach allows students to interact with text on multiple levels simultaneously. This approach also allows teachers to teach a variety of language lessons using the students’ own words and language. It can be used in kindergarten, first or second grade, for whole class reading instruction, or in third or fourth grade to work on grammar, punctuation, or language concepts. This approach consists of having children read for the first time by themselves an article or text which is already familiar to them. The words are not presented in isolation in sentences; rather they are presented in a whole phrase.

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<sup>10</sup> Cuzco, Adriana y Zhagui, Laura. (2010) “The Use of Concept Maps for Developing Children’s Reading and Writing Skills in a Foreign Language Classroom” Tesis de grado. Facultad de Filosofía, Letras y Ciencias de la Educación. Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa. Universidad de Cuenca. Cuenca. 40p



“Oh, how I wish you loved me that much as to accept my request of turning me into a vampire.”

*Graphic 18*

#### **2.4.4 Language Experience Approach**

“The language experience approach is an approach to reading instruction based on activities and stories developed from personal experiences of the learner. The stories about personal experiences are written down by a teacher and read together until the learner associates the written form of the word with the spoken.”<sup>11</sup> This approach is advisable to be used in English classes with a higher level of English as it demands a great interaction among the students and the teacher. Due to the fact that the teacher takes dictation from his or her

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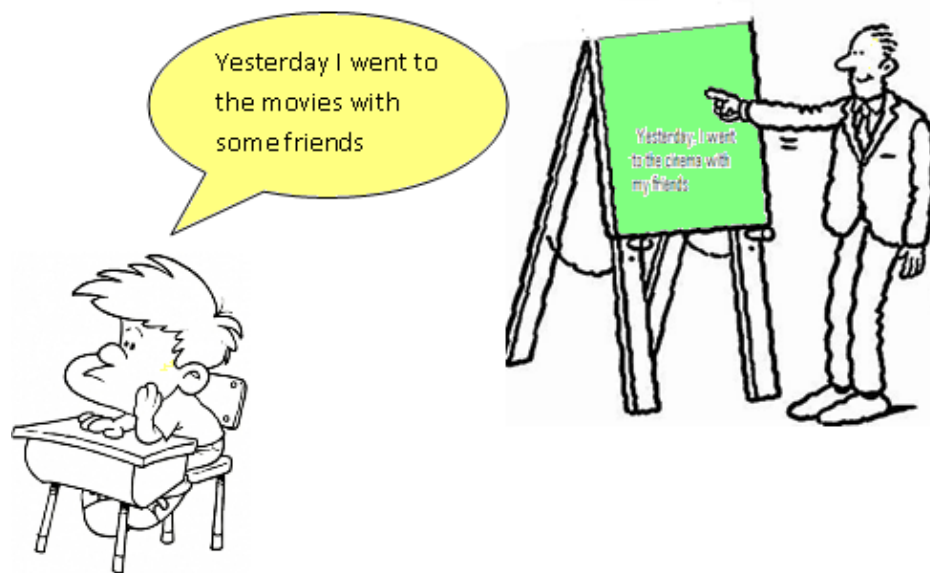
<sup>11</sup> “What is the Language Experience Approach?” SIL International. 1999. Internet.  
<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/literacy/referencematerials/glossaryofliteracyterms/whatisthe languageexperienceapp.htm> Access: July 11th, 2010

students (or has the students do their own writing) and then use the students' own words as reading material, it works this way:

- The teacher asks about a subject (a television show, a video game, or a recent experience) that his or her student enjoys.
- As the student speaks, the student neatly writes down his/her experience in his/her own words. If he/she says "don't" instead of "doesn't," the teacher should still write "don't." This is the time for the student to express his/her own thoughts in his/her way.
- When the student has finished his/her description or narration, both the teacher and the student should review his/her "writing" and read it together. The teacher may be surprised by how easily the student can read his/her own words--even words that might be considered difficult.
- The student's creation will be important to his/her motivation. The teacher should encourage him/her to illustrate it and/or staple it into the form of a book.

This approach is based on the following principles:

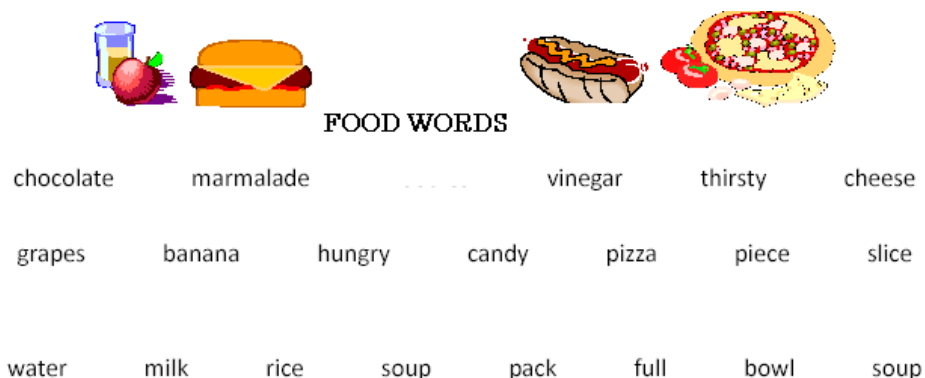
1. Learning occurs from the known to the unknown. The learner begins with his or her own spoken language.
2. Learning occurs most effectively in a general to specific direction. In reading, students must be immersed in a meaningful context of written language for learning to be most effective.
3. Struggling young adult readers usually have a low self-concept as readers and need to be assured of some immediate success. There is little to lose and much to gain with the LEA and assisted readings.
4. Teenagers are often very time conscious and need to leave each lesson with a feeling of accomplishment. Everyone reads at every LEA session.



*Graphic 19*

#### **2.4.5 Word Association**

This approach applies a game-based learning, making vocabulary more attractive and more fun for students to learn. It applies exercises that involve an exchange of words of the same rank. Students read a topic carefully to select the words according to a certain topic.



<u>Things you can drink</u>	<u>Things you can eat</u>	<u>Quantity (how much)</u>	<u>Food feelings</u>

*Graphic 20*

### 2.4.6 Rebus

The Rebus approach uses existing symbols, such as pictograms, purely for their sounds regardless of their meaning, to represent new words. It is a method of helping students involve in the act of reading words and pictures which are combined to convey a phrase or sentence. In other words, Rebus is the art of putting words into the form of pictures, which is an excellent way to make word memorization fun and exciting by changing the typical rote word memorization into a mind challenging students' game.



Graphic 21

During class time, simpler examples like the following ones can be found:

Gr+8=great

2+L=tool

 +  + U = I love you

Graphic 22

## 2.5 Stages in the Reading Process

Having explained what the approaches are, it is necessary to mention that the strategies and activities would be listed according to the three steps that could be taken into account while practicing reading with students. These steps are:

**Before reading (pre-reading):** The main purpose in this step of practicing reading with students is to:

- “Motivate students and get ideas for reading
- Activate background knowledge
- Teach vocabulary and concepts
- Encourage predicting and pre-questioning
- Relate the reading to the students’ lives.”<sup>12</sup>

**During reading:** The main purpose of this step of practicing reading with students is to ensure students’ understanding of the text being read by:

- silent and oral reading;
- getting acquainted with the text;
- suggesting activities;

**After reading (post reading):** The main purpose of this step of practicing reading is to analyze, share, and evaluate what the student just read by:

- questioning;
- discussing;
- writing;
- dramatizations.

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<sup>12</sup> Cuzco, Adriana y Zhagui, Laura. (2010) “The Use of Concept Maps for Developing Children’s Reading and Writing Skills in a Foreign Language Classroom” Tesis de grado. Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación. Especialización de Lengua y Literatura Inglesa. Universidad de Cuenca. Cuenca. 43p

According to Ausubel, it is important for both teachers and students to relate the new information with the previous knowledge that pupils possess in order to grant a meaningful learning as what they bring to the printed page may affect their comprehension. Given the importance of prior knowledge or previous knowledge in developing comprehension skills, the activation of this must be included in the process of reading subskills development. Therefore, an explanation of what prior knowledge in reading is mandatory. Prior knowledge refers to all the knowledge which students have gained throughout their lives. It is also known under the names: *world knowledge, background knowledge, memory storage, or experiential background*. Therefore, if prior knowledge is activated, meaningful learning is granted. As explained previously, there are three steps in the process of developing the reading skill: **pre-reading, during reading, and post-reading**. Prior knowledge is precisely activated during pre-reading.

Traditionally, strategies to activate prior knowledge have been called *purpose-setting* strategies and have been classified into three groups: 1) The teacher makes a statement or gives his/her students a word and students recall what they remember of it. To this category belong brainstorming and semantic mapping. 2) The teacher asks questions to get feedback from students. To this category belongs class discussion. 3) The teacher whether asks his/her students a set of questions and students predict what might be happening in the passage that is to be read or asks students to make up questions that will be answered once the reading is done. Pre-questions belong to this category.

## **2.6 Strategies to Activate Prior Knowledge or Pre-Reading Strategies**

### **2.6.1 Brainstorming**

This strategy can be used for both short texts and books. The teacher asks students to examine the title of the selection they are about to read. The teacher



lists on the board all the information that comes to mind as students read the title organizing the information given by students in a graphic organizer. The teacher in this strategy will be acting as a “facilitator.” The key in this strategy is to create the right atmosphere in the class. Brainstorming is not a strategy to be improvised by the teacher as it is usually thought to be; instead, it should be carefully planned in advance as it consists of the following steps:

#### **a.Preparation**

Briefly discuss a question or issue for the brainstorming session before the actual session. Give students a few days to think about it.

#### **b. Fact-Finding**

On the day of the brainstorming session, the teacher should start by clearly defining the problem or question. The question should not be too broad or ambiguous.

#### **c. Warm-up**

Warm up with an easy, perhaps fun activity. It would be better if it is related to the question written on the board.

#### **d. Idea-Finding**

This stage begins the actual brainstorming process in relation to the question written in step 2. For a successful idea-finding, the teacher should encourage students to come up with ideas and suggestions while he or she writes them down on the board. The teacher should write down on the board the following rules for this stage before carrying out this step:

- No criticisms or evaluations (no one should judge, evaluate, or in any way criticize anything that anyone else says)

- Non-interventionist (students can say whatever comes to their minds. No one should hold back. The wilder the idea, the better.)
- Quantity is wanted (the more ideas, the better. It's easier later to decrease a long list than it is to expand a short one)
- Combine, change, improve (add, modify, improve on other people's ideas)
- Relax, play, have fun (the brainstorming session should be a time to play and relax.

As the facilitator, the teacher has to remind students of these rules and ideas, when necessary, in order to guide and encourage them to a better participation. Periods of silent times can be considered as normal as students may be trying to think of an answer to come up.

#### **e. Solution-Finding**

At a point that feels right or when the teacher is running low on time, he/she should stop the Idea-Finding phase and announce that he or she will now be moving into the last phase. The teacher should examine and evaluate critically all the answers given by the students under the following guided questions:

- What solution or idea makes sense and what doesn't?
- Are some too simple or too complex?
- What is practical/feasible and what isn't?
- What would the results and consequences of each solution or idea be?

The teacher should then gradually narrow the list by crossing off or erasing ideas while trying to get the few very best solutions/ideas.

#### **f. Implementation**

The teacher finally discusses the results with the students.

#### **2.6.2 Predictions**

This strategy is based on the act of predicting. "Prediction is the strategy where students make educated guesses about what they are going to read based on their prior knowledge."<sup>13</sup> Predictions help students build up their expectations and understandings about a text before they read it. They involve thinking ahead and anticipating information and events in the text. After making predictions, students may read through the text to revise and verify their predictions. Predictions are very helpful to improve students inferring skill. A prediction can be determined *true*, *false*, or *needs to be changed*, while an inference is merely a well supported thought that can be more supported or less supported. An inference is definitely a higher level of thought. A prediction should be made only on text evidence and on nothing else, while an inference combines text evidence, clues, and prior knowledge to make an inference. Therefore, by helping students learn to predict, the teacher would be giving them the basis for inferring.

For a good development of this strategy, teachers should model the strategy of making predictions. The "think-aloud" strategy is very helpful. Here is a brief description of this strategy:

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<sup>13</sup> Raid, Joey M. *The Process of Paragraph Writing*. Second Edition. New Jersey, Prentice Hall Regents, 1994. Pag 138.

- The teacher has to think aloud modeling the process of predicting before reading. "I found an interesting book and by looking at the cover I guess or I predict the story will be about ..... When we use what we know to make a guess before we read it is called 'predicting, so right now, I'm predicting." The teacher can also start by making simple predictions; for instance, "Juanita has come dressed up today. What can you predict from this?" Students may come up with answers, such as "She will be meeting her boyfriend after class;" some other might say, "Her mother talked to her into dressing correctly to go out."
- The teacher has to think aloud while reading a book to students, modeling the process of predicting while reading. "I see, my prediction that the story would be about ..... was right, but I did not expect that ..... could happen. I'll make a new prediction. Based on what we read, I think that ..... will happen."
- Once the teacher finishes reading, he/she has to think aloud after reading, modeling the process of reflecting on predictions after reading. "My first prediction was \_\_\_\_\_. After reading part of the story I predicted that\_\_\_\_\_ would happen. Now that I have finished reading I think my predictions were close/not close to what really happened because\_\_\_\_\_."
- It is advisable to provide students with a copy of the following chart to help them make educated guesses.

<b><i>Text:</i></b>  <b><i>Author:</i></b>	<b>Predictions</b>
<i>Based on the title of the text, I predict the article will be about:</i>	
<i>Based on the photos, I predict the article will be about:</i>	
<i>Based on the subtitles, I predict the text will be about:</i>	

### 2.6.3 Semantic Mapping

This activity is very similar to brainstorming as it serves to activate prior knowledge in an organized and controlled way just as brainstorming. In both of them the teacher writes down ideas provided by the students about a certain topic on the board. The difference is that while in brainstorming all the ideas are listed on the board, in semantic mapping the ideas are written on the board under headings while the teacher elicits the information from the students. The procedure consists of:

- The teacher starts by selecting a word central to the topic.
- The teacher then writes this word on the board and allows students to look at the word and think of as many words as possible about the word.
- The teacher invites his/her students to generate as many words as possible related to the word written on the board. In other words, the teacher should brainstorm the word.
- The teacher asks students to label the information given by them. It means that the teacher should encourage students to find a way to put the information into categories.
- From the list worked on the board, the teacher constructs a chart.

#### **2.6.4 Know - Want to Know - Learned**

This strategy consists of three steps for students to use with expository text:

What do I Know? What do I Want to learn? What did I Learn?

This is an introductory strategy that helps students to recall what they know about a topic, regarding what they want to know, and finally listing what has been learned and is yet to be learned by categorizing information about the topic that the teacher expects them to learn.

The procedure is the following:

- The teacher should whether draw on the board three columns or give students a handout with the three columns. Students can also draw it on a clean sheet.
- The teacher then labels Column 1 K (know), Column 2 W (want to learn), Column 3 L (learn).
- Before reading, students fill in the Know column with everything they already know about the topic.

- Then the teacher can have students predict what they might learn about the topic, which might follow a quick glance at the topic headings, pictures, and charts that are found in the reading. This helps set their purpose for reading and focuses their attention on key ideas.
- The teacher then might have students put in the middle column what they want to learn about the topic.
- Then the teacher may proceed to have students read and fill in their new knowledge gained from reading the article.

K	W	L

*Graphic 23*

### **2.6.5 Pre- Questions**

This activity has been designed to help students improve their reading skills through predictions. The teacher asks a set of questions that pretend to first call for the students' attention and give a certain purpose to the reading. It has been proved that pre questions help students get involved in the act of making predictions and evaluating them. It is like a self-generated purpose as students will have to put more attention while reading to verify which of the hypothesis are right and which are wrong. The procedure is the following:

- The teacher prepares a set of questions before handing out the article to be read. The questions should be eye-catching to the students for a successful activity; if not, the teacher takes the risk of falling into a boring activity and wasting his/her time.
- The teacher writes the questions on the board and allows some time so as students can write them down on their notebooks.
- The teacher allows some time to students to think of the answers to the questions
- Students start reading in order to see how many guesses they have made.

A variation of this activity could be the following:

- Given the title and/or subtitle, the teacher should ask students to make any predictions, questions, clues, or connections with students.
1. Write the name of the author on the board and ask: Are you familiar with him or her? Is the writer still living? Any interesting facts about the person?
  2. Look at the cover of the book and the art work inside it. What's the message that the writer tries to convey?
  3. Read the "blurbs" on the back of the book, anything of interest? Are any pieces of the plot revealed? Are there any clues as to who the best audience of the book might be? Are there any descriptive words that catch your attention? Can you make any predictions?
  4. Who published the book and when was it printed? How many reprints have there been? Do you think this reprinting gives further information about the book?
  5. Look at the Table of Contents: How is the book set up? Sections? Chapters? Do they have titles that catch your attention? Do their titles give you clues to the text? How many pages does the book have?



6. Based on the entire ideas, make some predictions about the text you are about to read.

If the text to be read in class is short, the teacher could use the first three steps and then skip to the last. If, however, it is a reader, then the teacher should follow all the steps.

## **2.7 Strategies during Reading**

All the activities executed at this step have the function of monitoring, thinking about, and reflecting on the ideas and information that is contained in the text by making connections and generating questions. The strategies developed at this point should mainly focus on metacognition, as good readers use metacognitive strategies to think about and have control over their reading. What these metacognitive strategies mean is that the students will need to work on different strategies that may help them to be aware of their own mental process while they are reading. In other words, students should have the knowledge to know when and how to use particular strategies to answer questions while reading. As students can become confused during reading for a variety of reasons, their minds are thinking about the text, so they may simply be reciting the text, they may simply wander instead of paying attention. Once having finished reading, they don't remember what has been read.

Therefore, teaching students how to overcome these problems using strategies they have found useful can take a pupil to achievement in a reading quiz. Once these metacognitive strategies have been reached, the student can adjust his/her reading speed according to the difficulty of the text or go back if the understanding of one part of the text turns out to be difficult. The following list provides a series of strategies that students should mentally use when reading a text.

- Identify where the difficulty occurs ( I don't understand the third paragraph)
- Identify what the difficulty is (What does the author mean when he says...?)
- Paraphrase a passage in his/her own words (the author implies that .....)
- Look back through the text (The author talked about ..... in the paragraph before, but I don't remember much of it, I should go back again and try to understand.....)
- Look forward in the text trying to find the information needed for clarification (the text says that ..... and I don't understand it clearly, but the next paragraph takes .....as a heading, maybe if I read this section, I can clarify my ideas)
- Reread.
- Adjust the reading rate: slow down or speed up.
- Try to connect the text to something you read in another book, what they know about the world, or about something they have experienced.
- Use key words, bold print, italicized words, and punctuation for a better understanding.

As seen above, a teacher should always remind students of the importance of working on the metacognitive strategies when working on a reading exercise as when a test is taken; the metacognitive strategies are precisely the only tools that they will have to use to do it successfully. Therefore, when working on a reading exercise, the teacher should always be emphasizing on the steps mentioned before for each paragraph a student doesn't understand instead of giving him/her the answer right away.

The most successful way to teach these during reading strategies to students is to use very direct and explicit instruction. Therefore, the teacher should:

1. Orient students to key concepts, assess, and ask students to make a commitment to learn.
2. Describe the purpose of the strategy, the benefits, and the steps of the strategy.
3. Provide for guided and controlled practice of the strategy.
4. Gradually move to more independent and advanced practice of the strategy.
5. Once the strategy is learned, make sure that students begin to transfer or generalize the strategy to new and different situations.

The following strategies may help a student in developing metacognitive strategies:

### **2.7.1 Annolighting:**

It consists of highlighting a text. Students can highlight every single word in the text, so that it can become an effective tool to improve reading; some keys to use this strategy should be taught to students. Certain procedures should be included when using this strategy:

1. Identification of the main idea: Students ask themselves “What is the purpose of the reading?,” “Is this sentence supporting the main idea?,” “Is this an example or definition of a word?”
2. The teacher has to emphasize on making students aware of not highlighting the text the first time it is being read; first, they should try to find the answers to the questions above. They should rather skim the text.
3. Eliminate unnecessary words by using “telegraphic highlighting.” It means that the newly highlighted sentence still makes sense to the eye of the student. Sometimes up to 20 words or even more can be traced out from the reading. The student shouldn’t be surprised of this fact. Indeed, the longer the text, the more words can be eliminated.

4. It is advisable to use multiple highlight colors to annolight a text. For instance, use one color for the main idea and another for the supporting ideas.

Following there is an example of annolighting with directions: “Given the following text, identify what an ideal stragedy needs to have in order to be successful. What affected the main character in his behavior and what was his reaction? Write your answer in less than 50 words.”

This strategy could be used both during and after reading a text.

### **2.7.2 Inferential Reading:**

It consists of helping students transfer the inference skills they possess for everyday life to interactions with an English text. According to Kyleen Beers<sup>14</sup> there are two excellent resources that will help both students and teachers apply inferring skills into reading. She provides a list of thirteen types of inferences that skilled readers make.

Types of inferences skilled readers use:

- Recognize the antecedents for pronouns
- Figure out the meaning of unknown words from context clues
- Figure out the grammatical function of unknown words
- Understand intonation of characters’ words
- Identify characters’ beliefs, personalities, and motivations
- Understand characters’ relationships to one another
- Provide details about the setting
- Provide explanations for events or ideas that are presented in the text
- Offer details for events or their own explanations of the events

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<sup>14</sup> Dr. Kylene Beers is a Professor of Reading at the University of Houston. She has studied the reasons for and solutions to students' struggling with reading or being reluctant to read.

- Understand the author's view of the world
- Recognize the author's biases
- Relate what is happening in the text to their own knowledge of the world
- Offer conclusions from facts presented in the text.

It is advisable to start this strategy with a “making predictions” pre-reading strategy. Then the teacher needs to provide a short piece of text with which they are working and have them annotate as many inferences as they can. The teacher may then call for the student's answers and elaborate a graphic organizer. Having done this, they need to know why they arrived at their inferences and create a working list of types of inferences that skilled readers use. Therefore, the teacher needs to post the list given above in the classroom for easy reference.

A constant refrain in English classes should be, “How do you know the writer meant this?” Beers suggests that the teacher should remind students that authors don't expect readers to create inferences out of nothing. Authors provide information; readers use that information in a variety of ways to create their internal idea of the text. When authors aren't providing literal information, then they are implying something. As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, the teacher should tell students that readers infer and authors imply.

### **2.7.3 Double Entry Journal**

The purpose of this strategy is to help students to get more involved in the material they are reading as well as improve their content retention. This is an easy strategy to use in class. Students would not only improve their reading skill but their writing skill as well. Students will read a text and, while they read the text, they will record their responses to the text. Students will write down phrases or sentences from the reading and then write their own reaction to that passage. The steps are the following:

- The teacher shows students the passage they have to read.
- The teacher explains details about the writing students have to make.
- Students receive a piece of paper or a copy of an outline already prepared by the teacher. Students write in the left hand column a phrase or sentence from the text that was particularly meaningful to them. The teacher introduces a passage of text to the students. The teacher has students read the selected text making journal entries whenever a natural pause in the reading occurs, so that the flow is not interrupted constantly.
- In the right column, students write their reaction to the text they are reading. The entry may include a comment, a question, a connection made or an analysis.
- Students share their ideas in a class discussion.

#### **2.7.4 Reading Guides**

Reading guides help students in the understanding of a difficult reading material. Students respond to a teacher-created written guide of prompts as they read an assigned text; this way students can get a better comprehension of the text.

The teacher has to determine the major concepts from a text. The teacher then writes items designed to guide students through the major ideas and supporting details of the text. The guides may be statements or questions. Following is a sample of content for a reading guide:

- What is the main idea of the text?
- The author's purpose for writing the text is...
- The author discusses the differences between \_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_ .
- What are the important dates discussed in the reading?
- The most significant contribution of \_\_\_\_ was...
- What might be your personal experiences related to the reading?

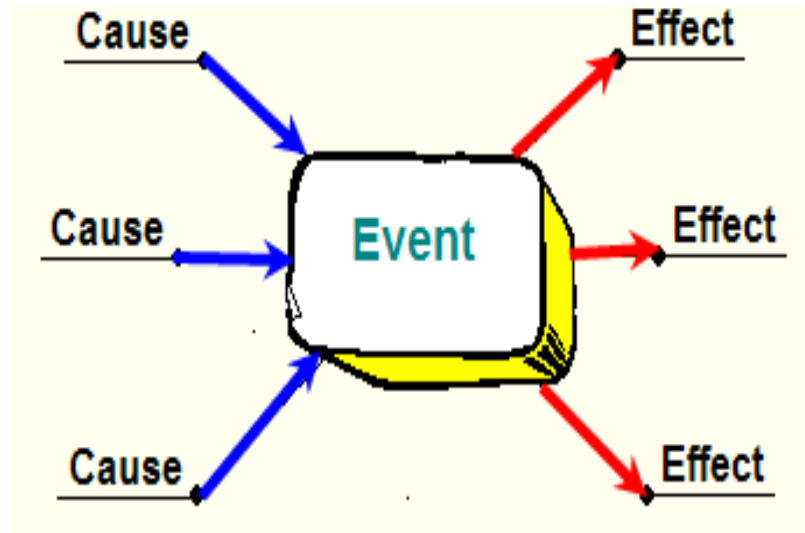
- The author's motivation for writing the text was...
- If the question contains sentences removed from the text, the teacher should ask students to look for clues to help them get the sentence in the space. These words could be: **that, it, this, he/she**, etc.

### 2.7.5 Structured Note-Taking

This strategy helps students become more effective note takers using graphic organizers specific to a particular text; this way they are going to improve their reading skill as they learn to interpret complex text structures by using their notes as a reading guide. The procedure is the following:

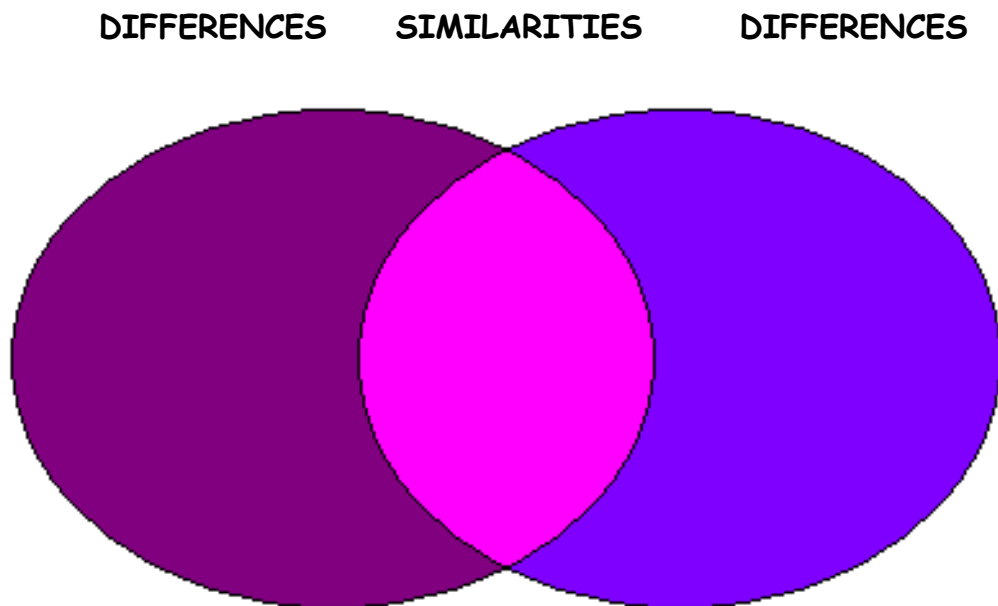
- Initially the teacher has to create the graphic organizers, but as students become more comfortable with using structured notes, they are able to construct their own. The teacher has to provide each student with a copy of the graphic organizer or draw it in the chart.
- As students read and complete the organizer, the teacher has to remind students to review their responses and check the connections they are making between concepts.
- Students discuss their responses as a whole group or within small groups. The teacher has to specify his/her students to focus their discussion on any questions where the students' answers differed.
- The following graphic organizers may help teachers in the organization of this strategy.

a. Cause/effect



*Graphic 24*

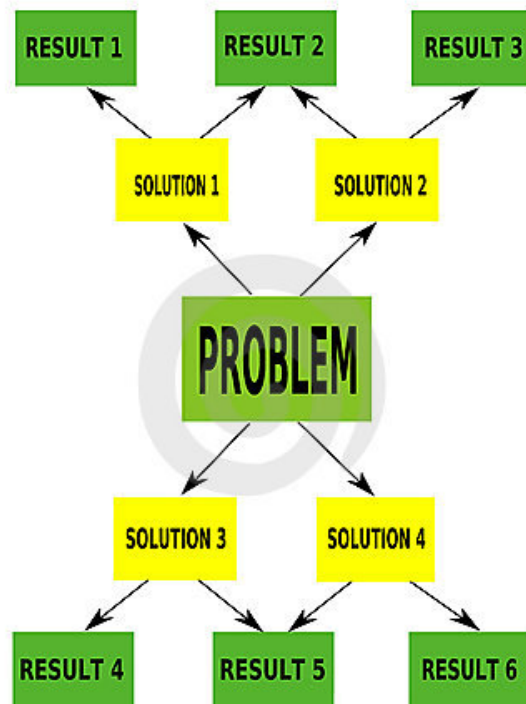
b. Compare/contrast (Venn Diagram)



*Graphic 25*



### c. Problem/solution



*Graphic 26*

## 2.8 Strategies After Reading

After Reading strategies are useful to consolidate what the student has read, by summarizing, representing the text mentally or graphically, clarifying interpretations of the text and helping students remember what they have individually created in their minds from the text. All the strategies used at this stage need a great deal of preparation before they are carried out in class. The following strategies might be helpful to improve reading skills at this stage.

### 2.8.1 Exit Slips

This strategy requires students to write responses to questions that the teacher has prepared before class and post them on the board. Exit Slips help students

reflect on what they have learned. There are different categories of exit slips, these being the following:

Prompts that document learning:

- Write one thing you learned today.
- Discuss how today's lesson could be used in the real world.

Prompts that emphasize the process of learning:

- I didn't understand...
- Write one question you have about today's lesson.

Prompts to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction:

- Did you enjoy working in small groups today?

Other exit prompts include:

- I would like to learn more about...
- Please explain more about...
- The most important thing I learned today is...
- The thing that surprised me the most today was...
- I wish...

The following steps will be helpful in the planning of the exit slips strategy:

- At the end of the reading, the teacher has to ask students to respond to a prompt prepared beforehand.
- The teacher may state the prompt orally to students or write it on the board.
- The teacher allows some time for students to finish the assignment.

- The teacher then reviews the exit slips to determine how he/she may help students towards a better understanding of the text.
- The teacher hands out the assignments to his/her students as a part of their portfolio.

### **2.8.2 Class Discussions**

The purpose of this strategy is to help students discover what meaning the reading has to them. During this activity, it's important to give students enough time to work either in clusters or as a class, so they all have opportunities to orally discuss their conclusions. There are different ways to carry out this strategy. They would go from simple peer-idea-sharing like working in small groups covering ideas such as "Who did what?", "Why?", "How?," etc. to more complex tasks like the following:

- The teacher asks students to pretend to be television reporters with two minutes to sum up the highlights of the "story." If the activity to be carried out is this, the teacher has to permanently monitor the class, as students can get too excited about it and it can lead the class into huge arguments. Eventually, students role-play the interview.
- A simpler way to carry out this strategy is to have students list the five main ideas of the assignment, beginning with the most important to the least by getting a consensus in the group.
- The teacher can ask students to take specific sides of the article and debate a specific idea provided by the teacher.

### **2.8.3 Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)**

With the guide of the teacher, the purpose of this strategy is to help students decipher what types of questions they are being asked and where to find the answers to them. There is in this strategy great importance of the modeling by

the teacher. It will help students think about the text they are reading and beyond it. Four types of questions are examined in this strategy

- **Right There Questions:** Literal questions whose answers can be found in the text. Often the words used in the question are the same words found in the text.
- **Think and Search Questions:** Answers are gathered from several parts of the text and put together to make sense.
- **Author and You:** These questions are based on information provided in the text but the student is required to relate it to his/her own experience. Although the answer does not lie directly in the text, the student must have read it in order to answer the question.
- **On My Own:** These questions do not require the student to have read the passage but he/she must use his/her background or prior knowledge to answer the question.

The procedure is the following:

1. Depending on the students, the teacher may choose to teach each type of question individually or as a group by defining each type of question and giving an example.
2. The teacher will have to read a short paragraph aloud to his/her students.
3. The teacher needs to predetermine questions he/she will ask after he/she stops reading. When the teacher has finished reading, he/she will read the questions aloud to students and model how the teacher expects the answers to the questions.
4. Next, the teacher has to show students how to find information to answer the questions (i.e., in the text, from your own experiences, etc.).
5. After the teacher has modeled the process for each type of question, he/she should invite students to read another passage on their own; with

the help of a partner, they determine the type of question they are being asked and how to find the answer.

6. At the end, students should be prepared to discuss and debate their reactions to the questions and how they figured out their answers.

#### **2.8.4 Summarizing**

This strategy enables students to identify the writer's main ideas, recognize the purpose or intent of the selection, distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, note the evidence to support the main ideas, identify the organizational pattern of the author, and identify the sequence of the material.

The procedure for this strategy is the following:

1. The teacher asks students to write a summary which is a condensed version of the text they read. This summary should include the writer's purpose, main points, point of view, and sequence of events at the students' level.
2. Students can share, compare, and discuss individual summaries in groups or as a class. It will lead to observations of opposite interpretations which students have not previously recognized.
3. Once students are working in groups, they will have to choose a headline to capture the reader's attention. They should include the same information they have in everyone's summaries.
4. The above articles could be used to create a class newspaper or magazine.
5. The teacher may then organize a debate about the reading.

Having explained the different strategies that can be used to develop reading skills in students, we consider that applying them to lesson plans using material existing in the school or materials available at the hand of the teachers would

be of great help to complete this portfolio. The *examples* shown below have been taken from the books students already possess or from available books in the school's library. The contexts of all these examples are perfect for the age and social context to which our students belong to. Students can establish relationships regarding their lives, needs, thoughts, beliefs and even spare time activities which would help the teachers accomplish the goal of improving students' reading skill "as readers begin to read, their background knowledge helps them comprehend the text"<sup>15</sup> Moreover, we will explain in this part the methodology shown in the lines before in a practical way, so that teachers have the opportunity to see how to carry them out in a structural and workable form. We will explain the application of each of the steps mentioned above as well as the skills, vocabulary, aim, group limit, time and procedure.

We present the following examples for reading activities that will show the teachers how the three basic steps to improve reading are not only worthy trying for making reading skills better, but for dynamizing and varying the class. Besides, they will help expand the lesson plan provided by teacher's guides or books that sometimes turn to be insufficient for the need of both teachers and students during class time.

The articles are well cited in case one of the teachers is interested in using the same article in one of his/her classes. It also contains the possible answers that students might give in class. However, this applied examples don't mean in any way a straitjacket that the teacher has to follow, quite the opposite, their purpose is to illustrate a procedure. Only the teacher who knows his/her students is the one who can decide upon which strategy should be used or not.

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<sup>15</sup> Raid, Joey M. *The Process of Paragraph Writing*. Second Edition. New Jersey, Prentice Hall Regents, 1994. Pag 1

## ***CHAPTER III***

### **PORTFOLIO FOR TEACHERS**

The portfolio we provide in this Chapter has been designed to give some ideas to teachers who have sophomore students in *Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingue Rosa de Jesus Cordero*. We will incorporate some applications of each of the strategies described previously including the vocabulary, the aim, the group limit, the time, the materials and the procedure.

#### **3.1 EXERCISES**

##### **3.1.1 PLACEBOS PROVE POWERFUL**

**Vocabulary:** *astonished, to melt, fake, worthless, to dismiss, heal.*

**Time:** 90 minutes in total, with one previous activity.

**Group limit:** No more than 20 students.

**Aim:** To help students identify the different kinds of questions that they can face when reading a text.

## Placebos Prove Powerful

By SANDRA BLAKESLEE

Many doctors know the story of 'Mr Wright'. In 1957 he was diagnosed with cancer, and given only days to live. He had tumours the size of oranges. He heard that scientists had discovered a new medication, Krebiozen, that was effective against cancer, and he begged the doctor to give it to him. His physician, Dr Philip West, finally agreed. After Mr Wright had been given an injection on a Friday afternoon, the astonished doctor found his patient out of his 'death bed', joking with the nurses the following Monday. 'The tumours,' the doctor wrote later, 'had melted like snow balls on a hot stove.'

Two months later, Wright read medical reports that the medication was fake. His condition immediately got worse again. 'Don't believe what you read in the papers,' the doctor told Wright. Then he injected him with what he said was 'a new super-refined double strength' version of the drug. Actually, there was no drug, just a mix of salt and water, but again the tumours melted. Wright was the picture of health for another two months until he read an official report saying that Krebiozen was worthless. He died two days later.

This story has been ignored by doctors for a long time, dismissed as one of those strange tales that medicine cannot explain. The idea that a patient's beliefs can make a fatal disease go away has been thought of as too strange. But now scientists are discovering that the placebo effect is more powerful than anyone had ever thought. They are also beginning to discover how such miraculous results are achieved. Through new techniques of brain imagery, it can



be shown that a thought, a belief or a desire can cause chemical processes in the brain which can have powerful effects on the body. Scientists are learning that some body reactions are not caused by information coming into the brain from the outside world, but by what the brain expects to happen next.

Placebos are 'lies that heal,' said Dr Anne Harrington, a historian of science at Harvard University. 'The word placebo is Latin for "I shall please" (or I shall make you happy) and it is typically a treatment that a doctor gives to anxious patients to please them,' she said. 'It looks like medication, but has no healing ingredients whatsoever.' Nowadays, doctors have much more effective medicines to fight disease. But these treatments have not diminished the power of the placebo, quite the opposite. Maybe when scientists fully understand how placebos work, the powerful healing effects of the human mind will be used more systematically!

16

<sup>16</sup> Puchta, Herbert, Jeff Stranks and Peter Lewis-Jones. English in Mind 4, Student's Book. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pag 12



Pre-reading: ***Brainstorming***

- The teacher starts by writing on the board the following question: “What is a placebo?” and asks students to find information about it as homework. Through class discussion, on the assigned day the teacher checks what students have found.
- The day of the brainstorming activity, the teacher will ask students the following question and write it on top of the board:

“What makes you feel better when you are ill or in pain?”<sup>17</sup>

- As a part of the warm-up activity, the teacher divides the class into two groups and calls students out for a name for each group. Having done that, the teacher divides the board into two parts. In each part the teacher writes a word and asks students to line up while giving a marker to the first person in each line. She then explains that students have to write down a word with each letter of the word written on the board. The words that could be used in this case could be:
  - placebo
  - treatment
  - medicine
  - illnesses
  - therapy
- Once the warm-up activity is over, students go back to their seats and the teacher points out that tolerance among the opinions of others is mandatory for the success of the following activity.

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<sup>17</sup> Puchta, Herbert , Jeff Stranks and Peter Lewis –Jones. English in Mind 4, Teacher’s Book. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pag 35.

The teacher then proceeds to ask for ideas to the question already written on the board. As students give their ideas, the teacher writes them on the board without omitting an opinion.

- Under the summarizing strategy, the teacher then makes a list the ideas listed on the board and splits the students' ideas under categories. For instance, psychological medicine vs. conventional medicine.
- To recap, the teacher discusses with the students what they had learned in the research (what is a placebo?) and how they relate it to the chart written on the board by asking them: Do you think a placebo is a part of conventional medicine or psychological medicine? The teacher allows some time to students to think about the question and give answers. The teacher then proceeds to have students read the article.

During Reading: *Annolighting*

- The teacher asks students the day before to bring markers of different colors to highlight a text.
- The day of the reading activity, the teacher asks students to skim the text.
- The teacher asks students the question: What is the purpose of the reading?, and asks students to find the answer to this question in the text; then he/she points out that this is the main idea of the article. The teacher asks students to underline this sentence with one color (red, for instance).
- The teacher then proceeds to ask students to underline the sentences that support the main idea, which would be the supporting details. The teacher points out that they have to use a different color of marker this time (blue, for instance).
- The teacher provides students with a set of questions to check comprehension. The questions would be:

1. According to the reading, what effect does the brain have over healing diseases?
  2. What effect did the first injection have on Mister Wright?
  3. What caused Mr. Wright's death according to the story?
  4. What have been the doctor's reactions to the story been and why?
  5. What new findings are there these days about the placebo effect?
  6. Do you believe that placebos can have a healing effect?
- The teacher then asks students to check which questions deal with the main idea and which questions deal with the supporting details.
  - In the case of the reading above, the first question would be related to the main idea. Although question five is related to the personal opinion of students, we believe that it also concerns the main idea as it is not clear in the students' mind, they wouldn't be able to answer the question.
  - The rest of the questions are related to supporting details.
  - The teacher then proceeds to have students answer the questions.

After reading: ***Exit Slips***

- The teacher provides students with a worksheet with the following tasks:
  - o Write one thing you learned today.
  - o Write one thing you didn't understand about placebos
  - o Write one question you have about placebos
  - o Write about one thing you would like to learn more about placebos
- The worksheet may have the following lay out:

Questions	Answers
Write one thing you learned today.	
Write one thing you didn't understand about placebos.	
Write one question you have about placebos.	
Write about one thing you would like to learn more about placebos.	

- The teacher allows some time to students to answer the questions.
- The teacher then collects the answers and reads them while making comments on them. The teacher may take a list of students' answers and then prepare a class discussion over the answers provided by students.
- The teacher then hands out the papers to students and asks them to keep them as a part of the portfolio. At the end, the teacher proceeds to a

class discussion and covers all the information that students might have needed to clarify ideas.

### **3.1.2            TIME'S RUNNING OUT**

**Vocabulary:**            *vanish, rate, to diminish.*

**Time:**                    90 minutes in total, with one previous activity.

**Group limit:**            No more than 20 students.

**Aim:**                    To help students improve their inferring skill in reading.

# Time's Running Out

"Our planet is running out of time. Modern man has abused it so much that by 2050 we will have used up all of its resources. The Earth's population will need to find and colonise two planets as our forests and fresh water supplies vanish." (WWF)

This is the conclusion of a frightening report from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) which experts will be discussing later this week in Geneva.

But will we really all be living in outer space fifty years from now? The answer is no. This is clearly unrealistic. The WWF are using this dramatic image in the hope that it will draw attention to the fact that now, more than ever, we need to take seriously the subject of how we treat our planet.

The report, based on scientific data from across the world, reveals that more than one third of the natural world has been destroyed by humans over the past three decades. Some of the frightening statistics it presents include:

- Since 1970 the cod population of the world's oceans has fallen from 264,000 tonnes to less than 60,000 tonnes. At this rate, the fish will have died out completely by 2030.
- Between 1970 and 2002 the planet's already heavily diminished forests were reduced by a further 12 per cent. In places such as South East Brazil, less than 7 per cent of the original forest remains.
- Black rhinoceros numbers have fallen from 65,000 in 1970 to around 3,100 now. The numbers of African

elephants have fallen from around 1.2 million in 1980 to just over half a million while the population of tigers has fallen by 95 per cent during the past century.

As a way of measuring how much each country is responsible for the destruction of the planet, the report uses a system which it refers to as 'ecological footprints'. Each country's 'footprint' is calculated by looking at how much it consumes of the Earth's resources and how much it pollutes the atmosphere in a year. From these figures experts can calculate how much land is needed to support one inhabitant of each country. The more land that is needed, the higher the 'footprint'. Unsurprisingly, the report is particularly hard on the developed countries of North America, Europe and Asia. At the top of the list is America with a footprint of 12.2 hectares (that's about 18 football pitches), almost twice the average for Western European countries which is 6.28 hectares. At the bottom of the list are the African countries. In Ethiopia, for example, the 'footprint' is 2 hectares and in Burundi, the country that consumes least resources, it is just half a hectare.

The message is simple and clear. Unless people in the developed world start living in a more environmentally friendly way, fifty years from now there simply won't be enough resources to go round.

*Pre-reading: **Predictions***

- The teacher comes to the board and writes on it: “Time’s running out.”
- The teacher then tells the class that they will be reading an article under this heading and asks students to predict what they might be reading about in the article and writes the answers on the board. Some probable answers might be:
  - o A competition will take place
  - o Some homework will be done
  - o We have to protect the environment.
- The teacher then asks students to look at the heading and complete the following chart:

<b><i>Text:</i></b>	<b>Predictions</b>
<b><i>Author:</i></b>	
<i>Based on the title of the text, I predict the article will be about:</i>	
<i>Based on the photos, I predict the article will be about:</i>	

- The teacher asks students to read the text and confirm their predictions of the chart.

*During reading: **Inferential Reading***

- The teacher asks students to read the text and check how many of the predictions they had made were right.
- The teacher asks students to read the text again.
- Having had students read the text, he/she asks them to complete the following chart:

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
1 What has happened to oceans since 1970?	
2 Write what the first paragraph primarily deals with	
3 Write what the last paragraph primarily deals with	
4 The primary purpose of paragraph three is to describe....	
<p>5 Which of the following conclusions about the environment is supported by the passage? Why?</p> <p><u>. The report blames countries like the United States and Ethiopia for using too many resources.</u></p> <p><u>. There is still a percentage of the original forest left in Brazil.</u></p> <p><u>. The report was written by journalists.</u></p>	
<p>6 How would you apply the following quotation to the text: "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop" Mother Teresa</p>	



After reading: *Question-Answer relationship*

- The teacher asks students to identify strategies they used to answer the questions above.
- The teacher explains students that there are different kinds of questions that may be asked in a reading exercise and that they are: Right There Questions, Think and Search Questions, Author and You Questions, On My Own Questions.
- The teacher should give a full explanation of each kind of questions, including examples if possible.
- The teacher finally closes the reading session with a class discussion about how they imagine life in the year 2100, using any of the activities provided in the After Reading strategy for class discussion.

### **3.1.3            WHY IS LAUGHTER THE BEST MEDICINE**

**Vocabulary:** *to be puzzled out, giggle, to speed up, astonishing, to preach.*

**Time:**            90 minutes in total, with one previous activity.

**Group limit:** No more than 20 students.

**Aim:** To help students learn strategies to insert missing sentences in an article.

## Why laughter is the best medicine

*Our unserious side is being taken seriously by doctors.  
Laughing helps you fight illness – and gets you fit. But how it works  
is still being puzzled out.*

A group of adults are lying in a circle on the floor listening to a recording of 'The Laughing Policeman'. At first everyone feels ridiculous and there's only the odd nervous giggle, but suddenly the laughter becomes real. It quickly spreads around the room until everyone is infected by it. (1 ———)

Doctors are starting to believe that laughter not only improves your state of mind, but actually affects your entire physical well-being. The people lying in a circle are attending a workshop to learn the forgotten art of laughter. (2 ———)

Britain's first laughter therapist, Robert Holden says: 'Instinctively we know that laughing helps us feel healthy and alive. Each time we laugh we feel better and more content.'

(3 ———) A French newspaper found that in 1930 the French laughed on average for nineteen minutes per day. By 1980 this had fallen to six minutes. Eighty per cent of the people questioned said that they would like to laugh more. Other research suggests that children laugh on average about 400 times a day, but by the time they reach adulthood this has been reduced to about fifteen times. (4 ———)

William Fry – a psychiatrist from California – studied the effects of laughter on the body. He got patients to watch Laurel and Hardy films, and monitored their blood pressure, heart

rate and muscle tone. He found that laughter has a similar effect to physical exercise. It speeds up the heart rate, increases blood pressure and quickens breathing. (5 ———) Fry thinks laughter is a type of jogging on the spot.

Laughter can even provide a kind of pain relief. Fry has proved that laughter produces endorphins – chemicals in the body that relieve pain.

Researchers from Texas tested this. (6 ———) The first group listened to a funny cassette for twenty minutes, the second listened to a cassette intended to relax them, the third heard an informative tape, while the fourth group listened to no tape at all.

Researchers found that if they produced pain in the students, those who had listened to the humorous tape could tolerate the discomfort for much longer.

Patch Adams is both a doctor and a performing clown in Virginia, America. (7 ———) 'There's evidence to suggest that laughter stimulates the immune system,' says Adams, 'yet hospitals and clinics are well-known for their depressing atmospheres.' Adams practises what he preaches. He wears his waist-length hair in a ponytail and also has a handlebar moustache. He usually puts on a red nose when seeing patients.

19

<sup>19</sup> Acklam, Richard, Sally Burgess. First Certificate Gold, Student's Book. England, Longman, 1998. Pag 85

Pre-reading: ***K-W-L strategy***

- The teacher gets copies of the following chart:

**Why is laughter the best medicine?**

<i>What I <b>Know</b></i>	<i>What I <b>Want to Know</b></i>	<i>What I <b>Learn</b></i>

- The teacher asks students to complete the **Know** column with knowledge they may have about the topic.
- The teacher then asks students to predict what they might be learning about this topic and asks students to complete the **Learn** column and what they **Want** to know about the topic.

During Reading: *Double-Entry journal*

- The teacher provides students with a copy of the following chart:

<b><i>Line in paragraph</i></b>	<b><i>From the text</i></b>	<b><i>My ideas</i></b>

- The teacher asks students to read the text and select a few phrases or ideas that they find interesting.
- The teacher asks students to copy the number of line where they found the phrase on the left-hand column of the chart and then they copy the phrase in the second column.

- The teacher then asks students to write their reaction on the third column, any connection, question, or analysis they have about that phrase.
- Having done that, the teacher asks students to find a connection between their ideas and the following ones:
  - ✓           **A**     Somewhere in the process of growing up we lose an astonishing 385 laughs a day.
  - ✓     **B**     It also makes out facial and stomach muscles work.
  - ✓           **C**     He is convinced that humour should be a part of every medical consultation.
  - ✓     **D**     Some have even been referred by their family doctors.
  - ✓     **E**     They divided forty university students into four groups.
  - ✓     **F**     This will also help improve your personal relationships.
  - ✓     **G**     But we could be losing our ability to laugh.
  - ✓     **H**     This is laughter therapy in action.”<sup>20</sup>
- The above sentences had been removed from the text. Once students have got ideas of connection, the teacher asks students to complete the text with the missing sentences.
- The teacher finally monitors and checks answers.

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<sup>20</sup> Acklam, Richard , Sally Burgess. First Certificate Gold, Student`s Book. England, Longman, 1998. Pag 85

After reading: ***Class Discussion***

- The teacher asks students to work in clusters (groups of three people is more advisable) and share their ideas about the phrases they got and their comments on them.
- The teacher asks students to prepare an interview about what makes them happy.
- Students make a role-play of the interview.

### **3.1.4 THE MIND MACHINE**

**Vocabulary:** to swing, lobotomy, to cope,

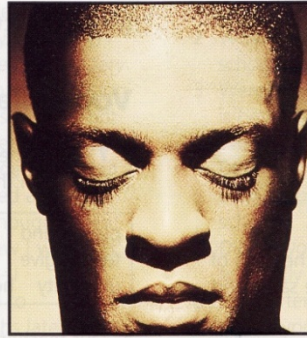
**Time:** 45 minutes in total, with one activity to carry out previously.

**Group limit:** 20 students maximum

**Aim:** To help students learn strategies to choose the most suitable heading for each paragraph in an article.



# The Mind Machine?



(0 — E —)

Although intelligence has been studied, and the brain has been studied, there is little understanding of how the brain works to produce intelligence. This has something to do with the fact that the brain contains around 100 billion cells (about the number of stars in the Milky Way).

(1 — — — —)

One of the continuing myths about the relationship between intelligence and the brain is that the brains of very clever people are somehow physically different from those of ordinary people. At the beginning of the century an American scientist called E.A. Spitzka produced a list of the weights of the brains of important, well-known men. The heaviest brain on the list was that of Turgenev, the Russian novelist, at 2000g. However, the brain of another great genius, Walt Whitman, weighed only 1282g.

(2 — — — —)

There are no significant differences between the intelligence levels of males and females. However, girls under seven score a little higher than boys in IQ tests and the highest IQ recorded is that of Marylin vos Savant at 230. However, men and women do differ in the way they think. Generally, women are more skilled verbally and men do better on visual-spatial tasks.

Interestingly, the fibres which join the two halves of the brain have been found to be larger in women than in men. This supports the theory that women can change from 'practical' to 'emotional' thinking more quickly than men.

(3 — — — —)

People with mental problems have often been treated extremely badly. Two hundred years ago, the mentally ill were swung around in revolving chairs, or holes were drilled in their skulls to release evil spirits. From the 1930s, the mentally ill were subjected to electric shock therapy and

lobotomy – the removal of part of their brain. In the 1960s and 70s, thousands of people were given drugs to cope with anxiety and then became addicted to them.

(4 — — — —)

The brain needs ten times as much blood as other organs of the body, as it can't store glucose for later use. This is different to muscles and other organs and although the adult brain makes up only two per cent of the body weight, its oxygen consumption is twenty per cent of the body's total.

(5 — — — —)

There are similarities between brains and computers. Computers can do complicated calculations at incredible speeds. But they work in a fixed way, because they can't make memory associations. If we need a screwdriver and there isn't one, we will think laterally and use a knife or coin instead. Computers can't do this. In fact, it is claimed that when it comes to seeing, moving and reacting to stimuli, no computer can compete with even the brain power of a fly.

(6 — — — —)

Most of our mental processes are deeply formed habits. Challenging your brain to do things differently helps it develop. Try changing routines as often as you can: take a bus instead of going by car, sit in a different chair. An extreme but useful exercise is to read something upside down – you can actually feel your brain at work.

Exercise more. Good health and fitness levels give you overall improved energy which leads to better concentration.

Cooking is a good all-round mental exercise. It needs mathematical, organisational and scientific skills as well as challenging memory and creative ability. Use recipes at first and then learn to guess amounts, combinations, reactions of ingredients and timing.

Do puzzles and play games. Teach yourself to work out codes and expand your vocabulary at the same time.

<sup>21</sup> Acklam, Richard, Sally Burgess. First Certificate Gold, Student's Book. England, Longman, 1998. Pag 59

Pre-reading: ***Pre-questions***

- The teacher writes on the board the heading of the text: *The Mind Machine*
- The teacher then proceeds to ask students the following questions:
  - What part of your body would you compare to a computer? Why?
  - Do you think women and men have different characteristics in their brains?
  - What kind of food do you think a person needs to have his/her brain working well?
  - What activities are useful to help your brain get concentrated?
- The teacher writes each question on the board and listens to his/her students' answers.
- Later, the teacher asks students to write the questions in their notebooks and write an answer to each of them.
- The teacher monitors the activity.
- The teacher then asks students to read the text and verify their responses

During reading: ***Reading guides***

- Given the kind of exercise that students have to do, the teacher should first ask students to read the text again and have them decide which one of the following subjects the text does not refer to:
  - ✓ "Improving your brain power
  - ✓ Men and women
  - ✓ Psychological illness
  - ✓ Brain weight



- ✓ Old age
- ✓ The physical needs of the brain.”<sup>22</sup>

- In order to find the right heading for each of the paragraphs, students have to find the main idea of each paragraph; that’s why the teacher asks students to read the text again and complete with only a few words the following questionnaire. For a successful activity, the teacher should point out to students that they get the main idea of a paragraph by asking themselves the question: “What is this paragraph about?” This will help them to get the main ideas easily. Therefore, students will choose the right heading more easily as well.

#### THE MIND MACHINE

1. What is the main idea of the text?

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2. What is the main idea of the second paragraph?

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<sup>22</sup> Acklam, Richard , Sally Burgess. First Certificate Gold, Student’s Book. England, Longman, 1998. Pag 84

3. What is the main idea of the third paragraph?

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4. What is the main idea of the fourth paragraph?

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5. What is the main idea of the fifth paragraph?

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6. What is the main idea of the sixth paragraph?

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- If it is still difficult for students to identify the main idea, the teacher should ask students to underline key words in the text that are related to the heading they think is suitable for the paragraph and see if they do a proper match. For instance, in the second paragraph the words *very clever people, physically different, ordinary people, heaviest brain, and weighed only*, give a clear clue for the heading: Is bigger better? In the third paragraph the words *intelligence levels, males and females, girls higher, boys, IQ tests, men, women, differ*, lead to the right answer which is: The battle of sexes. In the fourth paragraph, the words: *badly*,

*mentally ill, revolving chairs, hole, skulls, evil spirits, and removal of part of their brain* will lead students to a proper answer as well: A horrifying history. In the fifth paragraph, the words *brain, blood, and glucose oxygen consumption* will take the student to the answer: Bloodthirsty. In the sixth paragraph, the words *computers, speed, memory associations, and compete* would be key ones: The super computer. In the last paragraph, the words *habits, changing routines, exercise, and good health* would help students identify the right heading for the paragraph: *Make your brain work*.

- The teacher asks students to do the exercise and choose a heading for each of the paragraphs. The headings to be chosen would be:
  - ✓ A horrifying history
  - ✓ B Bloodthirsty
  - ✓ C Is bigger better?
  - ✓ D Make your brain work
  - ✓ E How much do we know?
  - ✓ F The battle of the sexes
  - ✓ G The super computer
- The teacher checks answers with students.

After reading: ***Summarizing***

- The teacher divides the class into groups of three people and with the strategy used in the during-reading activity to identify the main idea of each paragraph, students write a summary of the article.
- The teacher collects the summaries, makes the necessary corrections, and may post the summaries on the wall so everyone can see them.

### **3.1.5     A TRAVELLER'S TALE**

**Vocabulary:**            weary, to barge in, outweigh, stark, to startle, to usher, to be abashed off, to extricate, and to chasten.

**Time:**                    45 minutes in total.

**Group limit:**           20 students maximum

**Aim:**                    To help students to summarize an article for a better understanding.

# *A Traveller's Tale*

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JOHN FRASER

PEKING—The best traveller's tale so far this year comes from a young French woman who was staying at the Peace Hotel in Shanghai last July. After a long, wearying day, she took a bath and afterward went to get dressed in the adjoining bedroom. No sooner had she emerged from the bathroom than the floor boy walked right into her room with no warning. He had come to change the hot water in her Thermos bottles, a standard procedure here throughout the day.

It is impossible to lock your hotel room anywhere in China and staff barge in all the time and without notice. There is simply no Western conception of privacy in this land where communal necessities traditionally outweigh individual considerations. The French woman was stark naked and they were both so startled at each other's presence they stared in mute horror for a few seconds before beating a retreat in either direction.

A half hour later, one of the managers and some of the staff appeared at her room and asked the woman to join them downstairs for a discussion. She followed them and was ushered into a large room and offered some tea.

"There has been an incident," said the manager in a very serious voice. Pointing to the young floor boy, who stood somewhat abashed off to the side, he added: "He walked into your room when you were naked."

The woman, who was full of enthusiasm for China, at this point, immediately rose to the floor boy's defence. "It wasn't his fault," she said. "No one has ever trained him to knock at the door. I haven't made any complaint. Nothing happened and he didn't do anything wrong."

Deathly silence.

"Of course he didn't do anything wrong," said the manager finally. "It is you who did something wrong. It is not permitted to walk around naked in this hotel. It is not decent. It is only permitted to be naked in the bathroom. You have seriously upset this boy and he will have to go home to recover." There was another 10 minutes of constructive criticism before she managed to extricate herself. She left the room a humbled and chastened woman.

23

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<sup>23</sup> Conway, Munro Patricia. *Reflections*. Ontario, Pippin Publishing Limited, 1995. Pag 17

Pre reading: *Semantic Mapping*

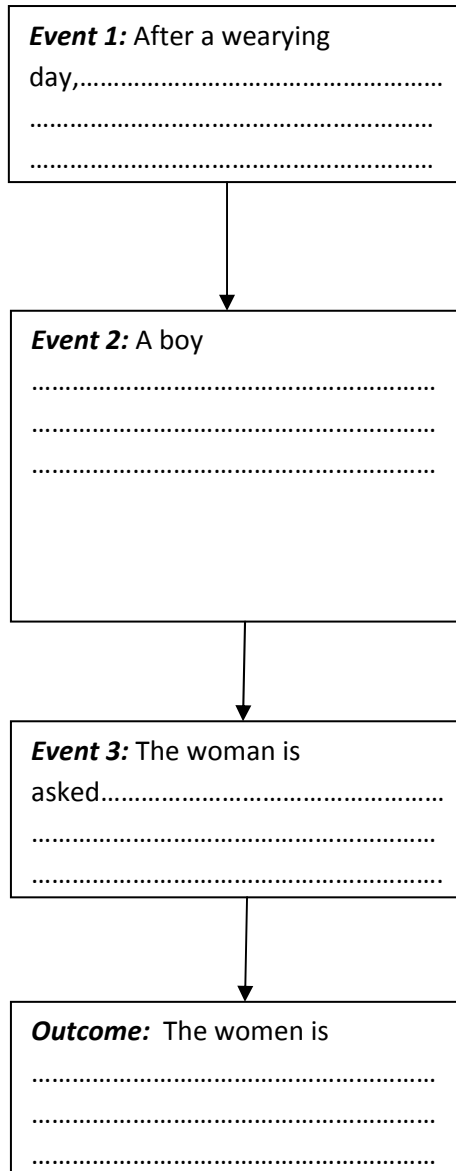
- The teacher writes on the board the word **privacy** and asks students to come up with as many words as they can think of.
- The teacher then asks students to find a way to label the words under two categories. In this case it could be: “What privacy is and misuse of the term privacy”, so the words can be split under these categories.
- The teacher builds a chart and includes the words there.

<i><b>What privacy is</b></i>	<i><b>Misuse of the term privacy</b></i>
Being on my own	Not to tell problems to anyone
Resting	Being irresponsible
Being alone	Keeping secrets even if they know they need help
Sharing with family members	

During Reading: *Structure Note Taking*

- The teacher provides students with a copy of the article and asks them to read it.
- Once students have finished reading, the teacher provides students with a copy of a Series of Events Chain map, like the following:

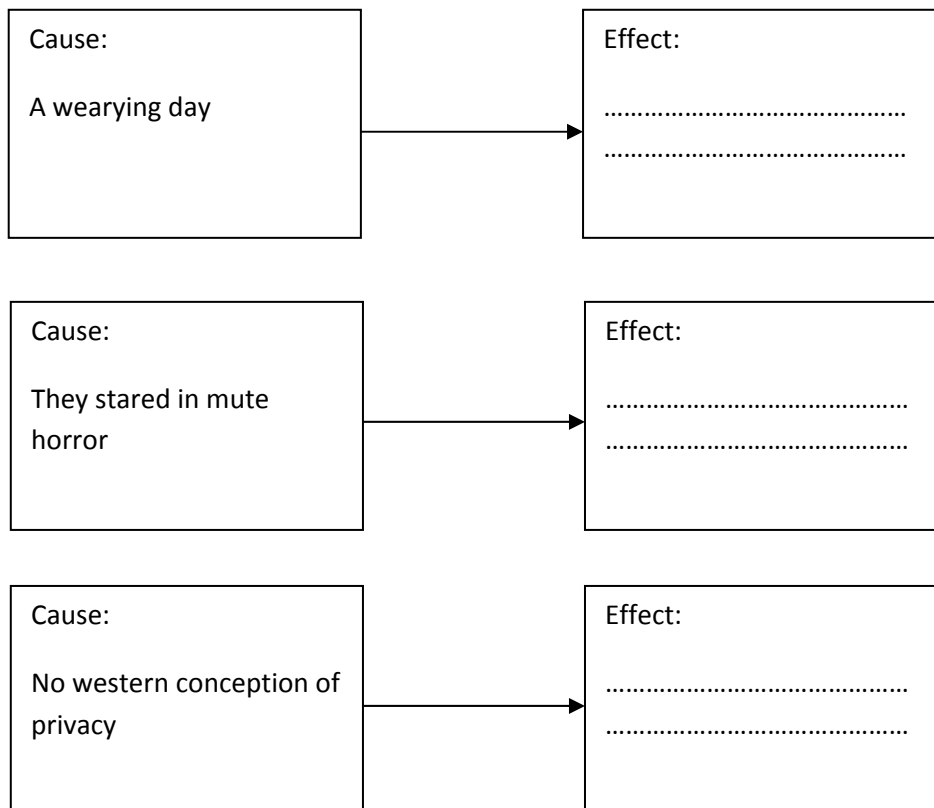
## A TRAVELLER'S TALE



- The teacher asks students to complete the chart with information from the text they had already read.
- The teacher then asks students to answer the following questions:
  - o Why does the writer say “after a long, wearying day?”

- Why does the author say the floor boy walked right into her room with no warning?”
- Why does the author say “they stared in mute horror?”
- Why does the author say there is no “Western conception of privacy?”

- With the help of students, the teacher works on the following chart:





- The teacher monitors students' work and answers.

After Reading: *Summarizing*

- The teacher asks students to write a summary of the facts of the story. Students should include only what really happened.
- Students retell the story from the point of view of one of the following:
  - o The Chinese floor boy
  - o The hotel manager
- Students decide on which point of view they prefer to write.
- The teacher collects the summaries mix them all. Then he/she hands them out to different students so they can read what other classmates think.

### 3.1.6 ACTION SPORTS AND RISK-TAKING

**Vocabulary:** . Risk-takers, to appeal, flat-out, to dash, to glide

**Time:** 45 minutes in total.

**Group limit:** 20 students maximum

**Aim:** To help students choose the best answer that fits best according to the text.

## Action Sports and Risk-Taking

Risk-takers have been taking part in action sports since the beginnings of time: the new challenge has always appealed to adventurous minds. The trick with risks is to understand the possible dangers and then remove them by treating each as a problem with only one solution: the safe one. From the outside the game still looks 'risky', but to the risk-taker who understands the difficulties, the game is a personal test of skill, rather than nerve. None of these sports *ought* to be dangerous; if they are, you're doing something wrong.

Risk-taking has other benefits. The best cure for a stressful working life may not be a week flat-out on a beach; emptying the mind merely leaves it open for occupation by the home stresses which you brought with you. Pick up a new challenge, something that is exciting, stretching, new, and you not only escape entirely from that other life, but return to it on a wave of confidence and strength that carries you over the problems which once seemed part of everyday life.

Action sports offer an escape, one where you learn very quickly: in one week – or even in one weekend – you can learn more about yourself than you did all year. All inner fears disappear in the burn of concentration demanded by learning to fly, dive, ride or climb. The pride earned through jumping from an aeroplane at 12,000 feet, or learning to roll a canoe, will stay with you for life. Then there are the other spin-offs: the mental

calm which comes with rock-climbing; the wonderful colours of caves; the moment of freedom felt during that first flight beneath the wing of a glider. All these sports cause a wonderful thrill – be it dashing waves or free-falling through the air at 120 miles per hour – but thrills are just a part of the story. Many of these sports double as types of travel. Horses, bicycles, skis, hot-air balloons can be used as vehicles for truly exotic journeys; journeys on which you can look at landscapes (and yourself) from a new angle. And all of these are 'soft' vehicles; ones which allow you to move through, and feel for, the countryside, the mountains and deserts.

The sports in this book cover the complete range of physical and mental skills: they can be done from your own doorstep or from any one of hundreds of places abroad. The sports demand from as little as the cost of a pair of boots to as much as it costs to buy a flying machine. Some of them are very easily reached (I have a friend who goes gliding in his lunch-break), while others require travelling-time and complex equipment.

Finally, remember that each action sport is a wonderful experience, and the more experiences we have, the richer we become, and the more we have to share.

Nick Crane

**1      *According to the writer, action sports***

- a      show a person's ability to overcome difficulties.
- b      are dangerous because of the risks they involve.
- c      test the daring of the person who does them.
- d      are far more interesting than playing games.

**2      *The word "it" in line 21 refers to***

- a      any holiday activity.
- b      life at home and at work.
- c      any action sport
- d      a challenging new activity.

**3      *What is the best type of holiday according to the writer?***

- a      Lying on the beach and doing nothing.
- b      Engaging in something you are confident about.
- c      doing something you have never done before.
- d      scaping to a place which is totally new for you.

**4      *According to the writer, learning action sports***

- a      can be extremely frightening.
- b      helps you to concentrate.
- c      makes you understand yourself better.
- d      is not a difficult task at all.

**5      *Which of these advantages of action sports is not mentioned by the writer?***

- a      maintaining fitness.
- b      experiencing thrills.

c building confidence.

d seeing new places.

**6 “spin-off” (line 33) are**

a action sports.

b benefits.

c achievements.

d skills.

**7 *In general, the writer says that action sports***

a are inexpensive.

b require a lot of time.

c are extremely varied.

d should not be done alone.<sup>24</sup>

Pre-reading: ***Brainstorming***

- The teacher asks students to think about extreme sports.
- The next class the teacher starts by writing on the board the following expression: How do you get rid of fears? And elicit answers from students.
- The teacher writes down the answers on the board without omitting any opinion.
- The teacher asks students if they have ever tried any extreme sports. If the teacher has a student who has tried it, the teacher asks her to describe the experience.

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<sup>24</sup> Paran Amos. First Certificate Gold Practice Exam, Student's Book. England, Longman, 1998. Pag 8

- The teacher writes on the board some important facts about the experience they had.
- The teacher makes a chart on the board with the headings: fears and extreme sports
- The teacher asks students the name of risk sports and writes them under the extreme sport category. Then asks students what kind of fear they would feel when practicing it.
- The teacher finally discusses answers with the students.

During Reading: *Annolighting*

- The teacher provides students with a copy of the text and asks them to skim the text.
- The teacher asks students: Does the author think that risk sports are worth trying? This would become the main idea of the text. The students will highlight this sentence with one color.
- The teacher asks students to highlight the difficult words, this may include the word spin-off; the teacher asks students to read three lines before and three after the word and asks students to think of the meaning they might predict from this activity.

After Reading: *Exit Slips*

- The teacher writes on the board: 1) What did you learn today about extreme sports? 2) Say one thing you didn't understand of the text. 3) Mention the advantages of practicing extreme sports. The teacher elicits answers.
- The teacher provides students with a copy of the questions students have to work on. Finally the teacher checks the answers with students.

### 3.1.7 THE BEST AD MISSED THE BOAT AT CANNES

**Vocabulary:** ad, moisturizes, grease, cunning, voice-over.

**Time:** 45 minutes in total.

**Group limit:** 20 students maximum

**Aim:** To help students improve their inferring skill in reading.

#### **The best ad missed the boat at Cannes**

This is the title of an article by Bob Garfield, an American expert on advertising. He was writing about the 1997 International Advertising Film Festival, which takes place at the same time as the main film festival in Cannes.

5

For Bob, the best ad of the year was from Delvico Bates, Barcelona, for *Esencial* hand cream. The ad shows a woman riding her bike, which has a very squeaky chain. The woman gets off the bike, opens her jar of *Esencial* and rubs some of the cream onto the chain. Then she rides away – but the squeak remains. Why? Because, as the voice-over says, 'Esencial moisturizes, but it has no grease.'

10

Why is this ad so good? It can't be for its special effects, because there aren't any. Might it be the music? No, there isn't even a jingle. Could it be that the woman is a celebrity? No. Bob's verdict: 'It's a vivid demonstration of brand non-attributes. Inspired. Cunning. Brilliant.' In other words, by showing failure in a different context, the quality of the product is reinforced – grease is good for bike chains, but not for the skin.

15

So surely this ad must have won at Cannes? No. The simple truth is that it couldn't win, because the agency failed to enter it in time for the festival deadline!

20

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<sup>25</sup> Capel, Annette, Wendy Sharp. Objective First Certificate, Student's book. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2004. Pag 58

### Answer the following questions

1. The International Advertising Film took place at the same time as the main film festival in Cannes.
2. What's the name of the product that was advertised?
3. Moisture is the same as grease? Why? / Why not?
4. The ad has many special effects.
5. It is considered the best ad because a celebrity performs it.
6. Why do you think the agency didn't get the ad on time for the contest?

### Pre-Reading: **Predictions**

- The teacher writes on the board: The best ad missed the boat at Cannes.
- The teacher tells students to predict what they think the article they will read under the heading above will be about.
- Possible answers might include: about a boat, about an advertising of a boat, about the city of Cannes.
- The teacher writes down the answers provided by the students on the board.

### During Reading: **Inferential Reading**

- The teacher asks students to read the text and asks student to check how many of the predictions they had made were right.
- Students will read the text again.
- While reading, the students will answer the true or false questions.

- Students check the answers with the teacher.

After Reading: **Question-Answer Relationship**

- Students recognize the kind of questions they just answered. (the kind of questions are explained on page 70)
- The teacher finally works on a class discussion about the best ads ever on television.

### 3.1 8 MAKING FUN OF EDUCATION

**Vocabulary:** to span

**Time:** 45 minutes in total.

**Group limit:** 20 students maximum

**Aim:** To help students learn strategies to insert missing paragraphs in an article.



## MAKING FUN OF EDUCATION

### Britain's first national children's museum aims to change the idea that learning is boring.

Gillian Thomas admits she is one of the lucky people who are so interested in their work that they find it difficult to separate it from play. 'I'd rather be doing my job than playing tennis,' she says.

0 H

Ms Thomas enjoyed school and Oxford university, although teaching secondary-school chemistry in London was less exciting. 'It felt too easy, round and round the same thing.'

15

She says she is still learning, still finding things fascinating, a philosophy she hopes Eureka will pass on to the 500,000 visitors it expects to attract annually within three years of opening. 'Using your hands and exploring with your senses is a way to get people to think,' she says. 'We are trying to create an environment where learning through play can continue. I want a trip to Eureka to be thoroughly satisfying, amusing but also serious and absorbing.'

16

The choice of Halifax was influenced by the Prince of Wales. When he and the Princess of Wales were asked to become patrons of the museum, they agreed on condition it was built in the north.

17

Research into children's interests and perceptions is already under way. She started with banking. 'Frankly, we thought it was the most boring, and so we thought we'd start with the difficult one.'

18

She admits to learning a lot from her own children. Her son Caspar is studying astrophysics at Cornell University in New York, and her daughter Hope has been taking A-level French and Art.

19

Before Halifax Ms Thomas lived in Paris. She learnt French at the Sorbonne, at the same time teaching science in English to French children. She then spent seven years at La Villette, the city for science and industry.

20

'It's relatively rare for someone to span the whole range from ideas to development, through the building stage, to the up and running,' she says. 'I liked the idea of trying to adapt that experience to a different situation in Halifax.'

- A** To do that she plans three exhibitions for the opening: 'Living and Working Together', showing how a town works; 'You and Your Body', exploring what makes everyone individual; and 'Inventing and Creating', which will include exhibitions of failed and successful inventions.
- B** 'It's an area with a fascinating history in terms of invention,' Ms Thomas says. 'It is a very different feel from the south.'
- C** The idea for Eureka received the backing of Vivien Duffield, the chairperson of the Vivien Duffield Foundation. She, too, had been impressed by a visit to the children's museum in Boston.
- D** When her own two children were young, she worked at home running a company making kites. She then returned to studying, obtaining a master's degree in science education.
- E** Not so. Children were fascinated by the idea of money. When one group were asked what a bank manager does, half sat back and put their feet on the desk.
- F** For one year after Caspar was born, she did nothing except watch him closely, thinking how to stimulate him. 'I was hovering to spot the next time he moved to see what I could offer him as a stimulating experience,' she says. 'I soon realised I needed a wider field in which to use my energies.'
- G** Her suggestions to the team for the La Villette project brought her the offer of a job. She joined the team as science adviser to the children's centre before being placed in charge. She soon headed the youth department, and the decision was taken to double the size of the children's centre. That was before Eureka came along.
- H** Ms Thomas is the director of Eureka, Britain's first national children's museum, which is under construction in Halifax, West Yorkshire. Eureka, she says, will attempt to push back the moment when children say: 'Education is boring. I don't want any more of it.'

26

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<sup>26</sup> <sup>26</sup> Paran Amos. First Certificate Gold Practice Exam, Student's Book. England, Longman, 1998. Pag 32, 33

Pre-Reading: **K-W-L Strategy**

- The teacher hands out the K-W-L chart.
- Students complete the chart. (follow the explanation given on page 57)

During Reading: **Double Entry Journal**

- The teacher writes on the board the following chart.

<b>Most Relevant Phrases from the text.</b>	<b>My own ideas about them</b>

- Students copy the chart in the notebook and complete it.
- Having done that, the teacher asks students to find connection between their ideas and the ones in the paragraphs removed from the text.
- To do this activity, the teacher should point out to students they will certainly need to read the text again checking what pronouns replace to, grammar structure, word patterns, etc.
- The teacher finally monitors and checks answers with students.

After Reading: **Class Discussion**

- Students work in pairs and share their ideas of the phrases chosen by them and what their reactions about them were.

### **3.1.9 THE GIFT OF THE MAGI**

**Vocabulary:** magi, clasp, plump, to whistle.

**Time:** 45 minutes in total.

**Group limit:** 20 students maximum

**Aim:** To help students to summarize a story with their own words.

# The Gift of the Magi

(a story by O. Henry – adapted)

It was the day before Christmas. James and Della's first as a married couple. Early in the morning, Della said goodbye to James as he left their tiny flat for work. He turned round, smiled at her and stroked her long, straight brown hair. He wasn't broad-shouldered, or very good-looking, in fact he was kind of short and plump, but he was her 'Jim' – poor, maybe, but she loved him because he was kind, patient and generous. 'I love that hair!' said Jim (as he always did), and then Della went inside.

Della took out her purse. In it was one dollar and eighty-seven cents. It was all she had in the world, and she felt like crying – not because they didn't have enough to eat (they were poor, but not that poor) but because she wanted to buy Jim a really special Christmas present – but with less than two dollars?

Della went into town. She stopped to look in the jeweller's window. There was the silver hair clasp she'd always wanted, and then she saw a beautiful gold watch-chain. That was it! Jim had a watch, his favourite possession: it had been his father's, but it didn't have a chain. She went in and asked how much the chain was. Five dollars! She walked out, almost in tears. How was she going to find the rest of the money?

As she walked sadly down the street she saw a sign outside another shop: 'We buy hair'. She looked at her long hair in her reflection in the window. She took a deep breath and went in.

Jim came home that evening, whistling happily. In his hand was the present he'd bought for Della. He went in the flat and called her name. He gasped in surprise when Della came out of the bedroom, her hair cropped short and spiky. She ran to him and asked him not to be angry with her, and then she said 'I can't wait until tomorrow. I must give you it immediately. Happy Christmas!' and gave him his present. Jim unwrapped it, smiled and sat down. Then Della told him why she'd had her hair cut off: 'I sold my hair to buy the chain. Jim – why are you smiling like that? Don't you like your present?'

Jim looked at her. 'It's wonderful – and I'm still in love with you, with or without the hair. But look, here's your present.' Della didn't know what to think when she saw – the silver hair clasp. 'Oh Jim, thank you – and it's OK, I can grow my hair again. But ... how did you get the money for this?'

Jim smiled again. 'Let's just put our presents away, Della, and have dinner. I'll tell you about it later.'

27

<sup>27</sup> Puchta, Herbert, Jeff Stranks and Peter Lewis-Jones. *English in Mind 3B*, Student's Book. United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pag 34

Pre- Reading: **Semantic Mapping**

- The teacher writes on the board: *the best gift*
- The teacher elicits answers from students.
- Once students have given the information, the teacher constructs the following chart.

<b>Expensive Gifts</b>	<b>Meaningful Gifts</b>

During Reading: **Reading Guides**

- The teacher asks students to answer the following questions:
  1. What does the story tell us about the way Della and Jim live?
  2. Why do you think Della took a deep breath before she went into the second shop?
  3. Why do you think Jim gasped in surprise when Della came out of the bedroom.
  4. Why do you think Della gave Jim his present a day early?
  5. Why do you think he smiled when he opened the present that Della gave him?
  6. How do you think Jim got the money for the hair clasp?

After Reading: **Summarizing**

- Students will end the story with their own ideas.

### **3.1.10 THE FRUIT CAKE SPECIAL**

**Vocabulary:** whistle, frozen.

**Time:** 45 minutes in total.

**Group limit:** 20 students maximum

**Aim:** To help students to choose correct answers.



On his way home, Harry forgot about the clay whistle in his pocket. He stopped for a coffee in a noisy shopping centre. As he searched his pocket for money, he felt the whistle in his pocket. When he had sat at his table he took it out to look at. It was still dirty. He gently cleared away the dirt. There was something written on the whistle. The marks looked like writing. He looked more closely and recognised some old Chinese writing. There was very little of it. All it said was: BE STILL.

*Be still?* How extraordinary. What did it mean? He looked at the whistle again. It was the kind that one blew from the top, like a football whistle. He wondered if it would still work. The thought came into his mind that he wanted to blow it. He wanted to very much. The whistle had not been blown since it had been placed in the pot all those years before. He would blow it. It was small – it would not make much noise. Nobody would notice. So he put it to his mouth and blew.

To his surprise, the whistle gave a thin, clear note that was louder than he expected.

Then there was silence. Complete silence.

Harry noticed something else, too. Everything was still. Nothing was moving. No noise, no movement.

Nothing.

People who had been walking were frozen in mid-step, like statues. They were as still as photographs.

But they weren't photographs. They were real people. Frozen people. Harry's eyes opened wide with surprise. He couldn't believe it. This should not be happening.

But it was. He looked around and saw frozen smiles, frozen steps, a fly frozen in flight, a ball thrown by a child lay frozen above the hand which was waiting to catch it.

And all the while a total, perfect silence.

Read the text again and circle the correct answers, a, b or c.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1 Why did Harry take the whistle out of his pocket?          | 3 What kind of sound was Harry expecting the whistle to make? |
| A Because he had forgotten about it.                         | A A thin, clear note.   |
| B Because he wanted to look at it.                           | B A musical tune.   |
| C Because he wanted to clean it.                             | C A quiet sound.  |
| 2 What did Harry notice when he first looked at the whistle? | 4 What happened when he blew the whistle?                     |
| A It had some Chinese writing on it.                         | A Everything turned to ice.                                   |
| B It had the words BE STILL written on it.                   | B Everything went quiet.                                      |
| C It was dirty.  | C Everything turned into statues.                             |

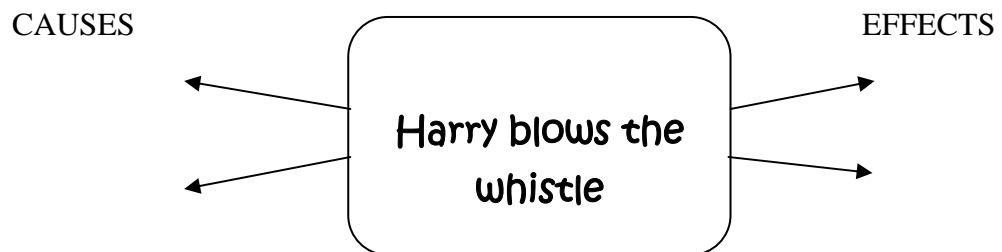


### Pre-Reading: **Pre- Questions**

- The teacher asks students if they had ever read the book: Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp and elicit answers.
- Other questions to be discussed are the following:
  - How did Aladdin respond to the magic of the Wonderful Lamp?
  - Did the Genie grant him all his wishes?
  - If you were Aladdin what wishes would you ask for?

### During- Reading: **Structure Note Taking**

- The teacher draws the following chart on the board.



- Students read the text and complete the chart.
- Students discuss their responses with the teacher explaining the reasons for their answers.
- Students work on the questions regarding the text.
- The teacher monitors work.

After Reading: **Class Discussion**

- Students discuss with the teacher what they have learned from the article.
- The teacher finally checks answers by asking: who whistle? Why? What happened?

## 3.2 *Answer key*

### 3.1.1 **PLACEBOS PROVE POWERFUL**

- *According to the reading, what effect does mind have over healing diseases?*

It has been shown that a thought, a belief, or a desire can cause chemical processes in the brain which can have powerful effects on the body.

- *What effect did the first injection have on Mister Wright?*

The tumor had melted like a snowball.

- *What caused Mr. Wright's death according to the story?*

That he found out that a placebo was a mix of salt and water and that it had no effect on his illness.

- *What have the doctor's reactions to the story been and why?*

Doctors had ignored the effect of the story for a long time because they didn't believe that a thought could heal an illness.

- *What new findings are there these days about the placebo effect?*

Doctors have much more effective medicines to fight diseases, but these treatments have not diminished the power of a placebo, quite the opposite. In the future, placebos would have a powerful healing effect.

- *Do you believe that placebos can have a healing effect?*

Students may have different answers to this question, but the teacher has to monitor the answers as they would show if students understood the reading or not.

### 3.1.2 TIME`S RUNNING OUT

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS
<i>1 What has happened to oceans since 1970?</i>	The cod population of the world's oceans has fallen from 264,000 tonnes to less than 60,000 tonnes.
<i>2 Write what the first paragraph primarily deals with</i>	A discussion in Geneva.
<i>3 Write what the last paragraph primarily deals with</i>	A message saying that we have to live in a more environmentally friendly way.
<i>4 The primary purpose of paragraph three is to describe....</i>	The concern we need to have regarding the protection of our environment.
<i>5 Which of the following conclusions about the environment is supported by the passage? Why?</i>  <i>. <u>The report blames countries like the United States and Ethiopia for using too many resources.</u></i>	

<u>. There is still a percentage of the original forest left in Brazil.</u>  <u>. The report was written by journalists.</u>	In places such as South East Brazil, less than 7 per cent of the original forest remains.
6 How would you apply the following quotation to the text: "We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop" Mother Teresa	No matter how small our help is, it would mean a lot to the protection of the out planet.

Questions are divided into the following way:

- Right There Questions: Question 1
- Think and Search Questions: Question 5
- Author and You: Questions 2, 3, and 4
- On My Own: Question 6

### 3.1.3 WHY IS LAUGHTER THE BEST MEDICINE

- 1 H, 2 D, 3 G, 4 A, 5 B, 6 E, 7 C

### 3.1.4 THE MIND MACHINE

- The answer would be: old age
- Possible answers for getting the main idea would be:

1. The weight and size of the brain count in intelligence

2. Men and Women have different types of intelligence
3. How mentally-ill people have been treated.
4. What the brain needs to work well.
5. Difference between the brain and the computer
6. How to improve intelligence.

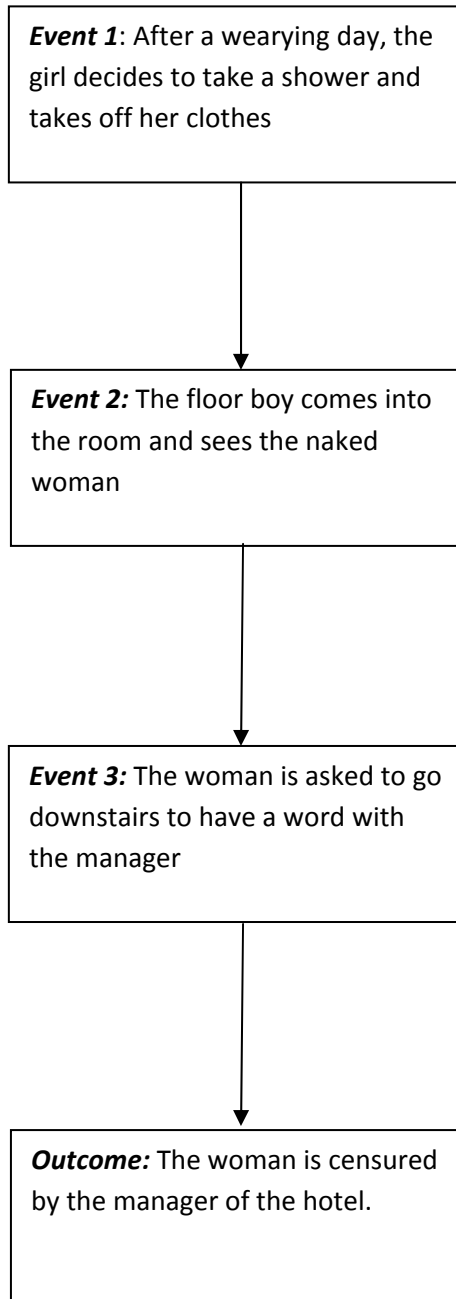
- The answers to the question are the following:

1 C, 2F, 3 A, 4 B, 5G, 6D

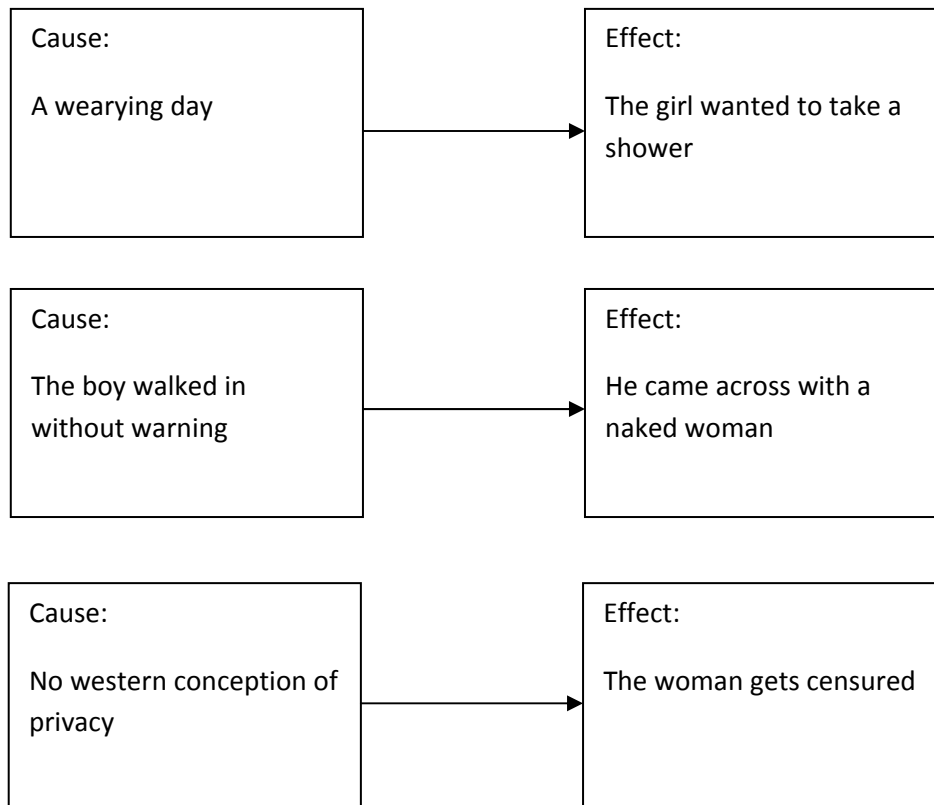
### **3.1.5 A TRAVELLER'S TALE**

- Some possible answers for semantic mapping might be:
  - Keeping secrets even if they know they need help
  - Resting
  - Being on my own
  - Sharing with family members
  - Being alone
  - Not to tell your problems to anyone
  - Being irresponsible
- Possible answers for Structure Note Taking might be:

## A TRAVELLER'S TALE



- Possible answers for the second part of Structure Note Taking.



### 3.1.6 ACTION SPORTS AND RISK TAKING.

1 c, 2 b, 3 d, 4 c, 5 b, 6 a, 7 a

### 3.1.7 THE BEST AD MISSED THE BOAT AT CANNES

1 Yes, 2 Esencial, 3 No, moisture is for skin and grease for chains, 4 No, 5 No, 6 student`s answers.



### **3.1.8 MAKING FUN OF EDUCATION**

1 D, 2 A, 3, B, 4 E, 5 F, 6 G

### **3.1.9 THE GIFT OF THE MAGI**

1. They were poor.
2. Because she was going to cut her hair.
3. Because Della had her hair cut and now she had no hair to wear the clasp.
4. To surprise him.
5. Because Jim had a made up his mind for buying the clasp instead of the chain.
6. Students' own answers.

### **3.1.10 THE FRUIT CAKE SPECIAL**

1 c, 2 c, 3 c, 4 c

## ***CHAPTER IV***

# **VALIDATION OF THE PROJECT**

The purpose of this study is to help students improve their reading skills by applying the modern theory of Ausubel and subsequently Novak's theory of concept maps. In addition, the project seeks to help students improve their metacognitive skills when reading a text. The study gives examples of the most relevant strategies used to accomplish the goal mentioned above.

### **4.1 Contextualization**

*Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School* is a private educational institute, which is located in the parish of Ricaurte of the city of Cuenca. The fore mentioned high school offers daytime classes. Its students come from middle to upper social levels of society. This institution has 1500 students and has contributed enormously to the growth of the province of Azuay and Ecuador, by educating children and adolescents from Cuenca and helping to place them in important social and cultural positions all around the country. *Catalinas*, as it is also known, is a prestigious school in Cuenca. This institution is bilingual. It is an officially recognized bilingual high school since 1998. In Rosa de Jesús Cordero High School, constructivism is the underlying pedagogical theory in all subjects. The school has put a great deal of effort in training teachers, no matter the subject they teach, in the most cutting-edge strategies in order to have students ready for the modern world. The student is considered the centre of the teaching-learning process, and the teachers think of themselves as facilitators. Being Catalinas a bilingual school, the efforts put in the process of teaching English have been even greater. Much has been done to train teachers

for a successful performance in the class. Therefore, this project corresponds to one of these initiatives that the school offers to teachers as a guide for the endless path of preparing students in this on-going and competitive world, trying to accomplish the lemma: “*Goodness, beauty, and science*”<sup>29</sup> for a flourishing life.

During the last two years, the school has been concerned about preparing students in the learning of the English language in a way that they not only master grammar but the macro skills as well. Therefore, the tests currently evaluate the four macro skills, which are reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The results have been proved to be positive according to the authorities and students feedback. They perform very well when travelling to an English-speaking country. However, there’s still much to be done in this matter. When students were asked about the problems they face when working out an English test, the first thing they say is “the reading part.”

The school has a wide variety of teaching materials for the English classes. Unfortunately, some of it has been misused due to the lack of didactic guidance. For this reason, we propose the elaboration of this didactic portfolio to help teachers use the material that the school possesses in an easier and more productive way.

The importance of this investigation lies on the way the new ideas are presented, based on creative tasks and on the elaboration of concept maps. As we have seen, a student who has been taught the different strategies to answer questions in a reading text, will feel at ease when doing simple activities, such as a reading exercise or more complex tasks like answering inferential reading questions in a test.

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<sup>29</sup> The School Anthem highlights these qualities in the second verse.

For these reasons, we propose a portfolio that teachers may use to help students to improve their reading skills.

The importance of this investigation lies on the fact that we provide teachers with a detailed strategy to work with students. Therefore, improving the students' reading skills, and why not, their general knowledge by correctly using the portfolio proposed in this project, will surely activate their prior knowledge; developing the metacognitive strategies represent the means by which a student cannot only connect ideas with each other but also be aware of the difficulties that he/she might face while reading; additionally, he/she may find the best ways to overcome them. Once these skills have been acquired, not only the English area would benefit but also the rest of areas. Subjects like Literature and Social Studies would also benefit, since working with students who have a good domain of the skills explained above would facilitate the teachers' job in the process of reading and getting information.

#### **4.2 Group Selection**

We decided to work with the students of *Sophomore Classes* for the following reasons:

1. The students were evaluated by the Dirección de Educación last year when they were in *Tenth Grade*. The evaluation showed that the reading skill represented the lowest grade in the total score.
2. There has been a change in the books students are using this year. They moved from *English in Mind 3A* to *English in Mind 4*. As it was explained, students had a gap of half a book to study this year. Therefore, teachers needed some support to overcome the problems they would be having with their students.

As students who attend this school belong to a middle-to-high social class, they have the opportunity to travel abroad. A high percentage of students

travel abroad in their vacation time, so the reading portfolio offers articles dealing with experiences occurring in other distant countries such as China, as a way to expand their knowledge and promote their learning of the subject of Social Studies. It also includes a reading about computers. In the school, one out of every two students possesses not only a computer at home but also they have access to internet. Reading about computers turns to be interesting to them. As most parents spend lots of time at work, and given the current negativism happening not only in our country but also worldwide, we consider it important to include in the portfolio readings with a positive subliminal message such as the benefits of laughter; this way, we would be contributing indirectly to create among students a feeling of positivism and relief in this harsh world. Given the global concern towards the protection of the environment, we also deemed it convenient to include an article about it, to ultimately promote among students a responsible attitude towards taking care of what is their only home: “the Earth”.

#### **4.3 Project Presentation**

We have considered of great importance to present this project to the authorities of the school, the Principal and Vice-Principal. We have also validated this project with the English Coordinator, and a group of students, so we can get a good feedback when we make the final validation of this project.

#### **4.4 Project Validation**

In order to validate our project, we selected a group of students at random; we selected some whose domain of English is good and some whose domain of English is not very high. Regarding the teachers, currently the school counts with a good number of new teachers, so we tried to include them in the validation of this project as they could give us important insights for the appropriate usage and possible application of this portfolio.

The survey aimed to collect data from students and teachers about the possible applicability of the portfolio in class time as well as to know the advantages and disadvantages that the portfolio may have. We also aimed at knowing whether the presentation of the portfolio was the right one or if it needed some changes.

Given the time students and teachers possess, the validation was made in meetings in different times with each group by applying a survey.

The scheme followed in the meetings was the same though. It started with an explanation of the work developed and the goal we were trying to get after its completion. Eventually, the meeting ended with the survey. The number of people surveyed was 15 (5 teachers and 10 students). The selected group to validate our project was asked to complete a survey; depending on the group, the questions were:

*Students:*

**1. Do you think that the portfolio helps you to improve your reading skill?**

Yes ☐

A little ☐

No ☐

**2. Do you think the construction of concept maps with the guide of the portfolio is:**

easy ☐

a little difficult ☐

difficult ☐

**3. Do you think the strategies used in the portfolio help in the organization and understanding of an article in a reading class?**

Yes ☐

A little ☐

No ☐

**4. How interesting do you think the class can be with the usage of the portfolio?**

very interesting ☐

a little interesting ☐

boring ☐

**5. The information presented in the portfolio is:**

organized ☐

organized but needs to be improved ☐

not clear ☐

*Teachers:*

- 1. Do you think that working with pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading strategies help in the process of reading?**

Yes ☐

A little ☐

No ☐

- 2. What do you like of the portfolio?**

It helps students understand a topic. ☐

It introduces variety into the classroom. ☐

The way it develops the students' ideas. ☐

Other ☐

- 3. Do you think the usage of this portfolio is worth trying?**

yes ☐

no ☐

- 4. Does the portfolio provide a good deal of explanation that help the teacher to improve the reading skill in students?**

yes ☐

a little ☐

no ☐



**5. The information presented in the portfolio is:**

organized

organized but needs to be improved

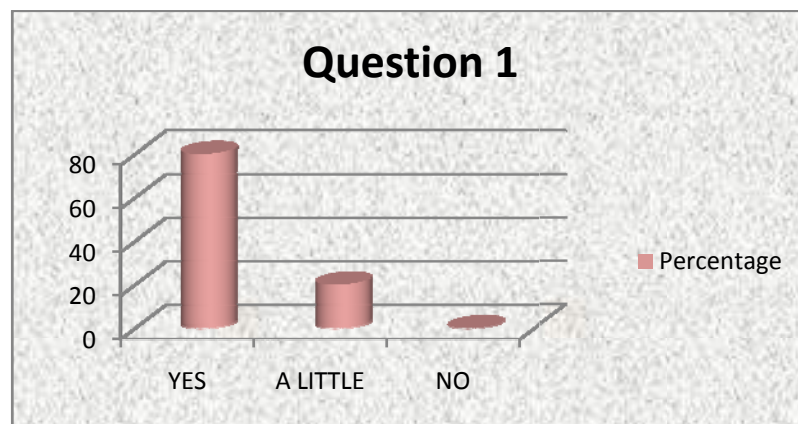
not clear

**4.5 Analysis of Results**

In the survey applied to students we got the following answers:

4.5.1 Do you think that the portfolio helps you to improve your reading skill?

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
10	Yes	8	<b>80%</b>
	A little	2	<b>20%</b>
	No	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		10	100%



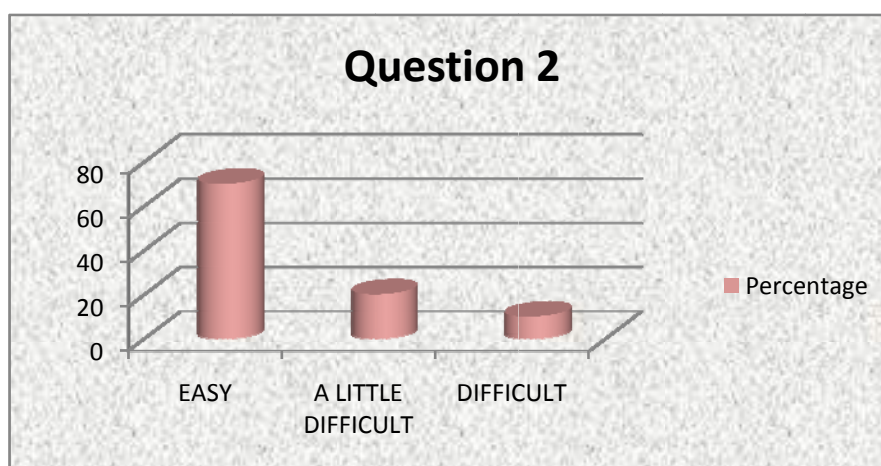
*Graphic 27*

By looking at the answers to this question, can say that eight out of the ten surveyed students consider that the portfolio would be of great help for improving their reading skill and only two of the ten surveyed students think that the portfolio would only be of a little help in the improvement of their reading skill.

We can then conclude that the majority of students are positive about the usefulness of the portfolio in the improvement of their reading skill.

3.5.2 Do you think the construction of concept maps with the guide of the portfolio is:

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
10	easy	7	<b>70%</b>
	a little difficult	2	<b>20%</b>
	difficult	1	<b>10%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		10	100%



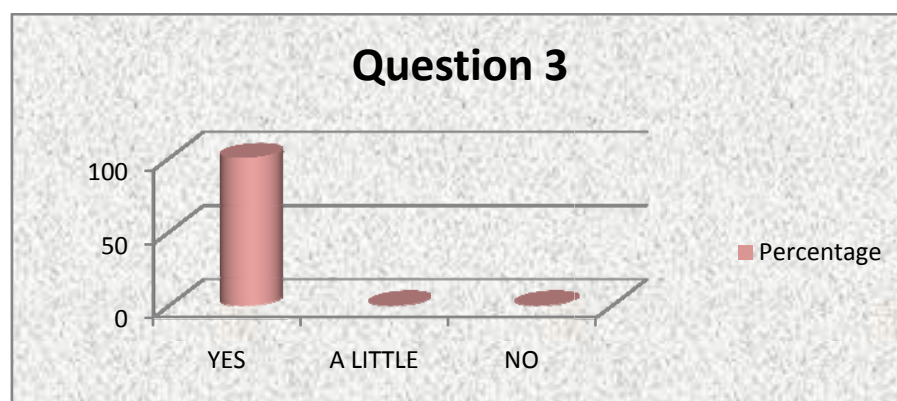
*Graphic 28*

The results show that seven out of the ten surveyed students consider that the portfolio could help them to construct concept maps. Only twenty per cent of the students think that the construction of concept maps is a little bit difficult with the help of the portfolio and just one student thinks that it is difficult to construct a concept map with the guide of the portfolio

As a conclusion, we can say that the majority of students think that the portfolio would definitely help them to construct concept maps and this way improve their general knowledge by using information in a new context and relating it to previous knowledge.

### 3.5.3 Do you think the strategies used in the portfolio help in the organization and understanding of an article in a reading class?

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
10	Yes	10	<b>100%</b>
	a little		<b>0%</b>
	No	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		10	100%

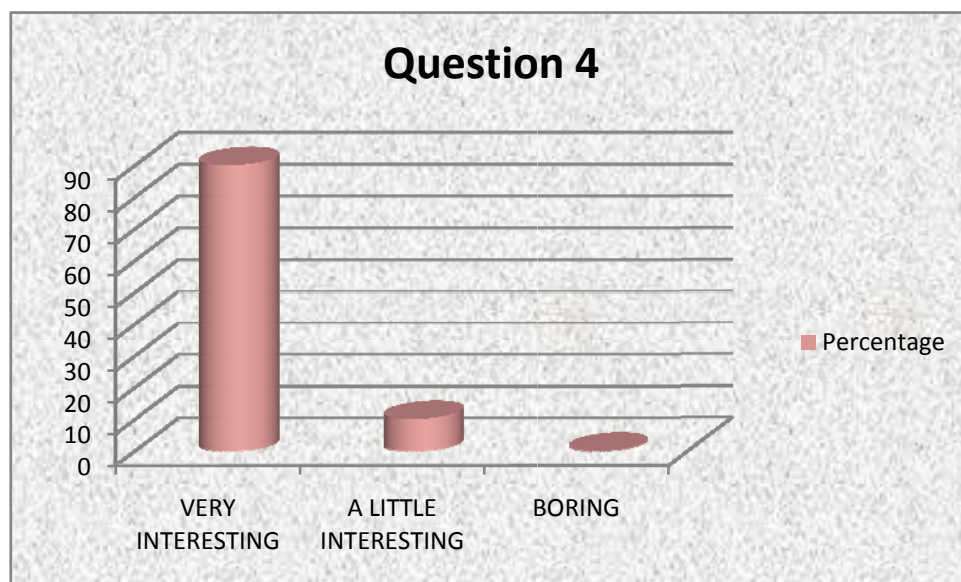


*Graphic 29*

One hundred per cent of the surveyed students think that the portfolio would be very useful for the improvement of the understanding of a text. If students don't understand a text, they would feel frustrated and the process would slow down.

#### 3.5.4 How interesting do you think the class can be with the usage of the portfolio?

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
10	very interesting	9	<b>90%</b>
	a little interesting	1	<b>10%</b>
	boring	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		10	100%

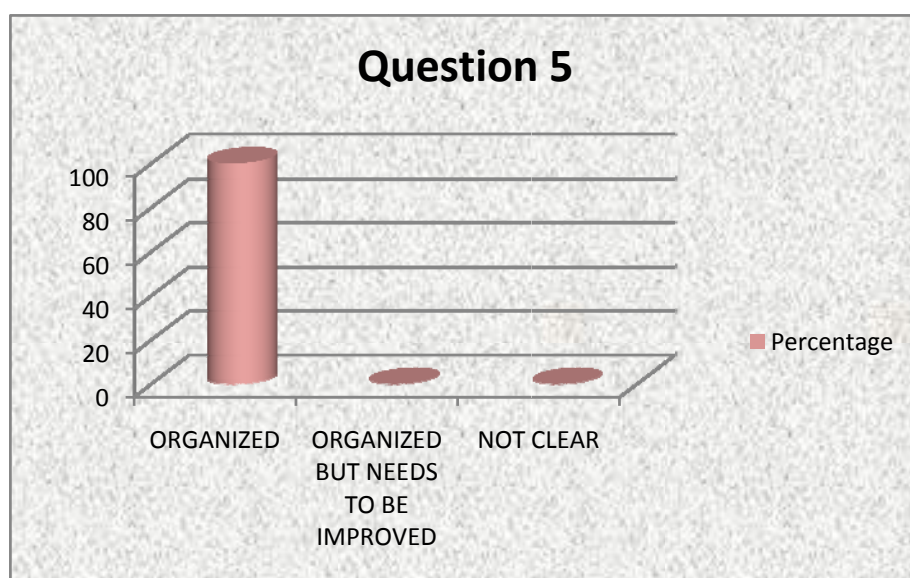


*Graphic 30*

The results here show us that ninety per cent of the surveyed students think that the portfolio is very interesting while only ten per cent of the students think that it is only a little interesting, none of them thinks that it is boring. Therefore, the portfolio is a fun way to improve the reading skill.

#### 4.5.5 The information presented in the portfolio is:

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
10	organized	10	<b>100%</b>
	organized but needs to be improved	0	<b>0%</b>
	not clear	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		10	100%



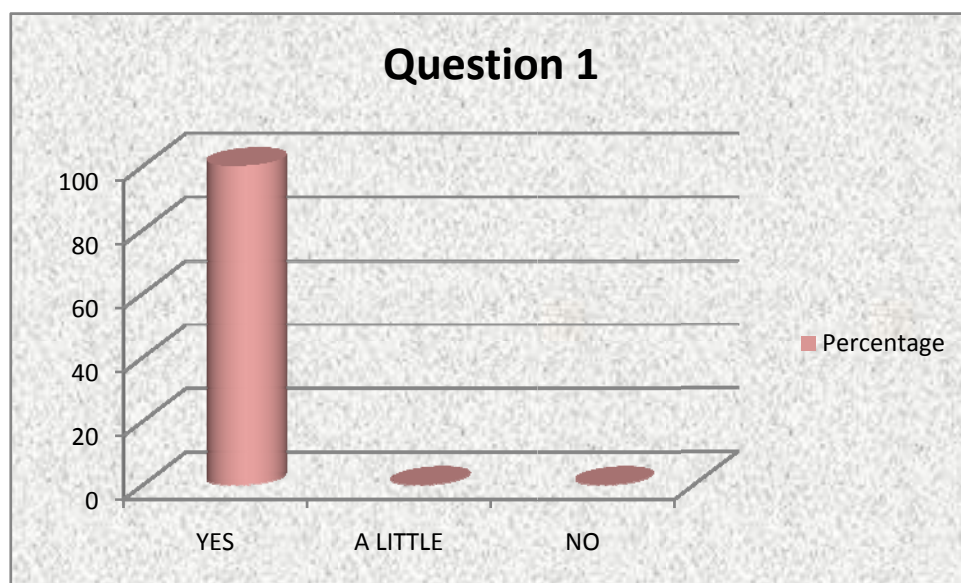
*Graphic 31*

According to the students` answers, the information contained in the portfolio is very well organized. None of them thinks the information is not clear or needs to be improved. This confirms that the portfolio would be a great tool to improve the reading skill.

In the survey applied to teachers, we got the following answers:

4.5.6 Do you think that working with pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading strategies help in the process of reading?

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
5	Yes	5	<b>100%</b>
	a little	0	<b>0%</b>
	No	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		5	100%

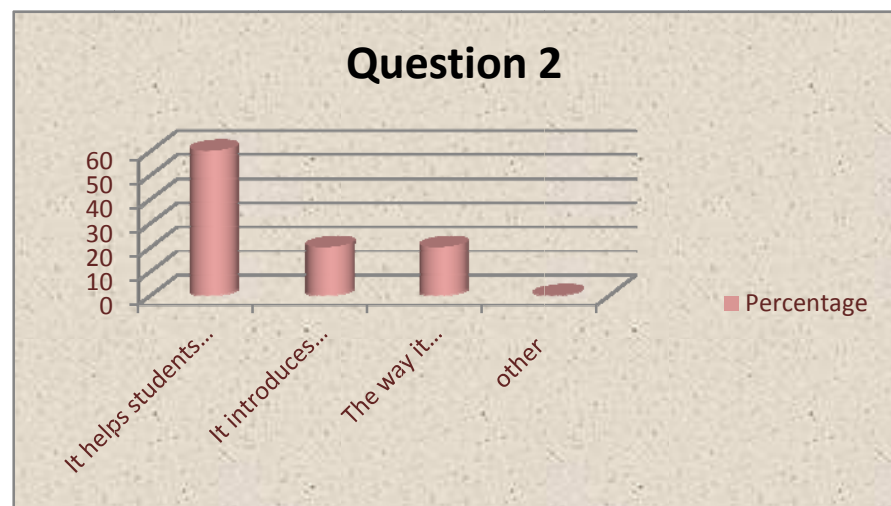


*Graphic 32*

All teachers who answered the survey agreed on the fact that working with pre-reading, during-reading, and after-reading strategies would be beneficial when working on reading a text. None thinks it wouldn't help students.

#### 4.5.7 What do you like of the portfolio?

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
5	It helps students understand a topic	3	<b>60</b>
	It introduces variety into the classroom	1	<b>20</b>
	The way it develops the students' ideas	1	<b>20</b>
	Other	0	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		5	100%

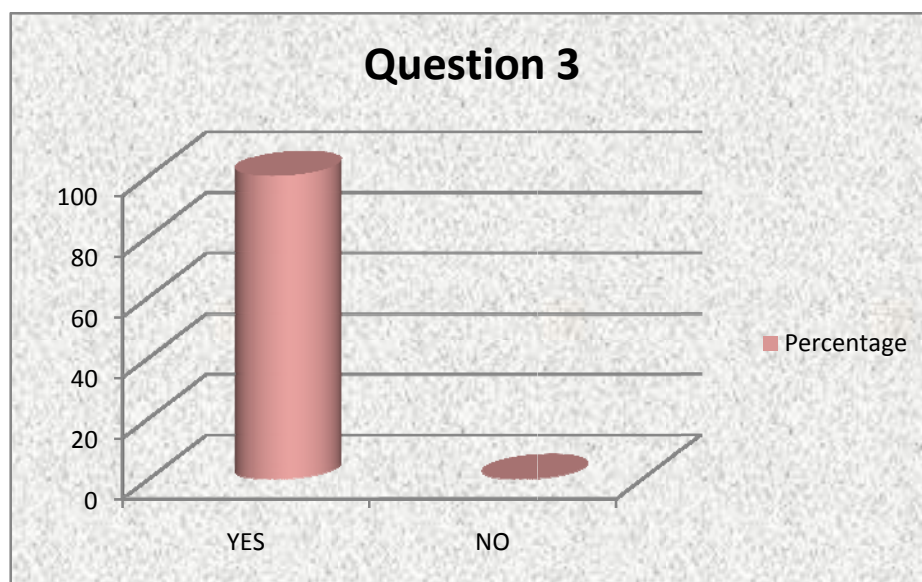


*Graphic 33*

Of the five teachers surveyed, sixty per cent like the idea that the portfolio develops the ability to understand a topic; twenty per cent like how it varies a typical reading class; another twenty per cent like the way it develops ideas. No teachers gave other reasons. We can conclude that teachers like the portfolio because the way it helps students improve their ability to understand a topic is very productive

#### 4.5.8 Do you think the usage of this portfolio is worth trying?

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
5	yes	5	<b>100%</b>
	no	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		15	100%



*Graphic 34*

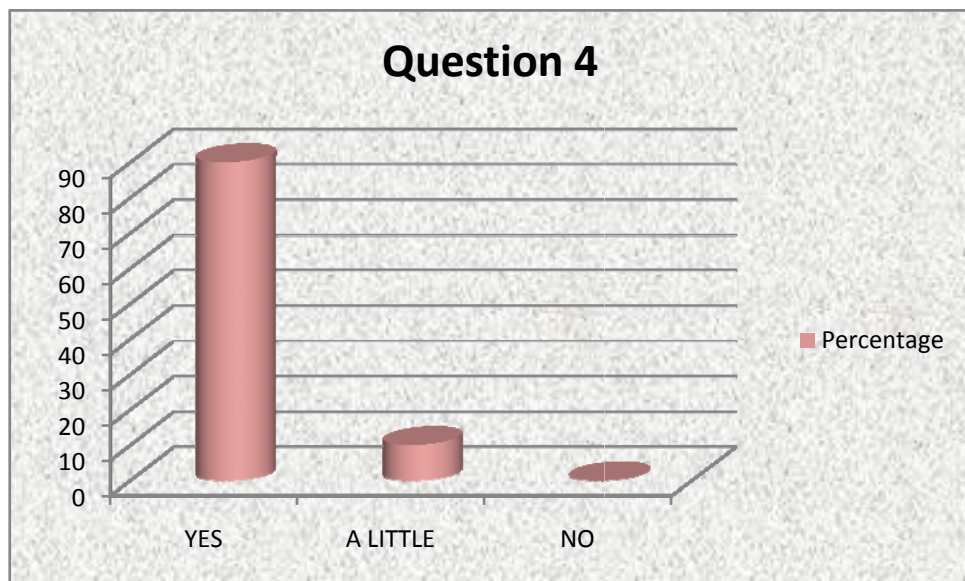
As shown in the graph, all the teachers surveyed think that it is worth trying the portfolio in class. They all agreed in the fact that the portfolio helps them to



overcome several problems that they might face in class time when students ask for strategies to use when they have to answer difficult questions.

4.5.9 Does the portfolio provides a good deal of explanation that help the teacher to improve the reading skill in students

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
5	Yes	4	<b>90%</b>
	a little	1	<b>10%</b>
	No	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		5	100%

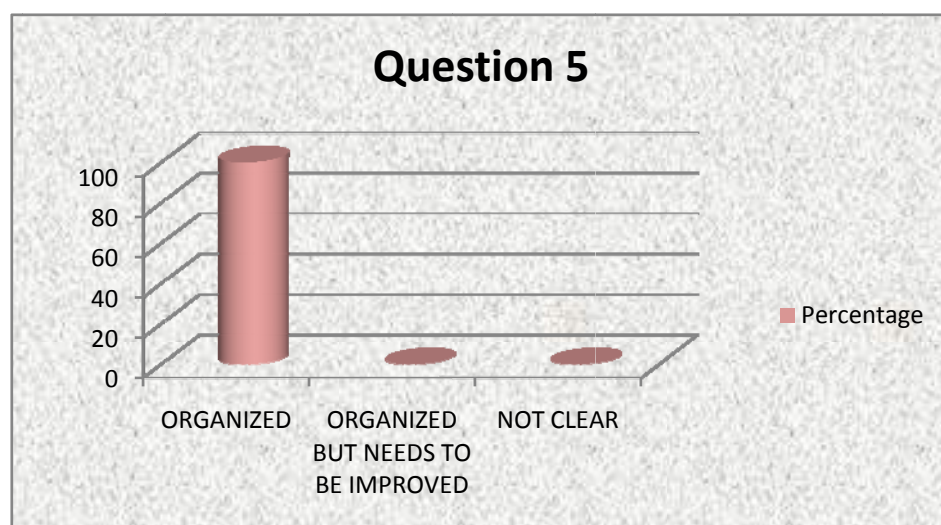


*Graphic 35*

Ninety per cent of the teachers think that the portfolio gives very clear instructions to teachers. Only one teacher thinks that the portfolio needs more explanation. In conclusion, teachers think that the portfolio is very explanatory in the procedures that should be used in class.

4.5.10 The information presented in the portfolio is:

SAMPLE	ITEM	ANSWER	PERCENTAGE
5	organized	5	<b>100%</b>
	organized but needs to be improved	0	<b>0%</b>
	not clear	0	<b>0%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		5	100%



*Graphic 36*

All the teachers who answered the survey think that the portfolio is well organized. They agreed with students on the fact that the information shown in the portfolio is clear.

In conclusion, we realize that both students and teachers like the portfolio because they can have fun, add variety to the class, and most importantly, get a better understanding of a text.

Now that the validation of the project was carried out, we can refer to the importance of sharing the portfolio with teachers and think about applying it in our own classes in the process of improving reading skills as the portfolio describes creative forms to help students overcome difficulties when answering questions in a test; only by this means the process of learning English will be prevalent in the students' lives.

## CONCLUSIONS

After having accomplished our research titled *A Didactic Portfolio to Develop the Reading Skill in Sophomore Classes, Groups 1, 2, and 3, at “Unidad Educativa Experimental Bilingue Rosa de Jesús Cordero”*, we have arrived at the following conclusions:

- Each reading lesson plan should include the three steps of reading: pre-reading, during reading, and after reading.
- Activities chosen to be developed during the pre-reading stage have the purpose of getting the student acquainted with the material that is about to read.
- Activities chosen for the during-reading stage have to be organized in a way that helps students improve their metacognitive strategies as well as keep their motivation towards reading.
- A metacognitive strategy aims to take students to a higher thinking level by creating in them a feeling of awareness towards making changes and adapting strategies if they perceive they are not doing so well in the exercise or goal set by the teacher in a period of class, so that they are able to recognize the strategy that works well for them in an exam.
- Metacognitive strategies include activities such as making predictions, making connections, using context clues, using graphic organizers, and writing comments of questions on the article being read.

- Graphic Organisers are of great help during all the stages when planning reading sessions in class as they are flexible and endless in application.
- Graphic organizers show the order, process, weaknesses, strengths, and comparisons so that the student's understanding of a text becomes clearly evident.
- Since many graphic organizers use short words or phrases, they are ideal for many types of learners.
- The after-reading strategies aim to help both teachers and students evaluate the knowledge acquired and monitor their progress as pupils learn.
- The improvement of reading skills is a slow process that requires the teacher's patience, creativity, and wisdom to help students get their goals. Of course, achieving this will demand time and the results will be seen in the long term, as it is not the case of learning grammar rules, which may be attained in a shorter period of time.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- We recommend teachers to use the didactic portfolio when they have in mind to do a reading exercise in class.
- The teacher has to master the vocabulary and concepts of the article which is going to be read.
- The teacher should encourage students to use concept maps to organize the information in a text before answering questions.
- The teacher should spend some time before class in the planning of adequate strategies for each stage of the reading process.
- Teachers should promote the students' use of metacognitive strategies when doing reading exercises instead of giving them the right answer right ahead.
- The use of metacognitive strategies should be encouraged at early stages (elementary school).
- Teachers should be very innovative at the moment of choosing the right activity for each stage of the reading process ; the portfolio we propose can be adapted to all needs, knowledge, and experiences of students.
- If teachers want to improve the reading skill in the English class, we suggest teachers the use of the didactic portfolio because they provide students with good opportunities to recognize mistakes when reading while having fun at the same time.

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