CARCHI STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY.

Reading Strategies for College Students and Skilled Readers

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DEDICATORIA

A mi familia – por concederme el privilegio de amarlos.

A mis colegas - por compartir sus conocimientos, experiencia y leal amistad.

A mis estudiantes - por mantener viva la llama de mi vocación de docente.

PROLOGUE

Carchi State Polytechnic University created its English Center on May 27th, 2013 by Resolution 092- CSUP in order to teach foreign and native languages to members of the university community and those individuals who enroll in this Centre. Its aim is to develop spoken and written communication skills supported by a curriculum based on international standards. On this regard, students must pass 8 English levels to reach B2 level with reference to the performance standards of the Common European Framework and the educational UPEC model.

Noticeably, students entering UPEC University bring a low reading comprehension level. This was evidenced by the society linking program SNNA – Carchi State Polytechnic University held in the period March 2013 - August 2013. This program aimed to determine the levels of verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning and abstract reasoning and then plan training courses in these areas. This process involved approximately 1,200 students from bachelor third year of major colleges in the province of Carchi, before admission to colleges, universities or polytechnics. The average verbal reasoning achieved was unsatisfactory.

A second experience that determined low-level-verbal reasoning and reading comprehension was evidenced by the study performed by Mgs. Jairo Chavez and Lcdo. Ludgardo Rosero, UPEC teachers who conducted a research

with 231 students from different faculties of this university and were able to determine that the prevailing level of verbal reasoning was unsatisfactory.

A third reason which hinders reading comprehension is because prior to semester April - August 2013, B1 level of proficiency in English was handled and after this date level B2 is the current one. In this transition college students have experienced difficulty developing reading comprehension with regard to build up new vocabulary, identify main ideas, find specific information, make summaries, draw conclusions, generate and answer questions in an environment where lack of literal, inferential and critical - evaluative comprehension is evident.

Researchers agree that reading comprehension is a process. "It is the interaction among word identification, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement" (Cunningham et al., 2004, p. 186). Also, Yang (2006) claims that for decades, a great amount of studies have been done to investigate the influences of reading strategies on readers' comprehension. Therefore, this research seeks to provide an alternative solution to the problem establishing the importance of intentional reading strategies in reading comprehension development among college students at UPEC University. Its identification and gradual implementation will deal with the stated problem and reduce the   difficulty in reading academic subject matter and in comprehending what they have read, resulting   in higher rates of student success and retention, according to academic standards.

ABSTRACT

This research aims to contribute to the development of scientific production in the Carchi State Polytechnic University strengthening its critical-social constructivist pedagogical model and formation in values.

The contents investigated can develop academic and professional teacher training, a significant body of knowledge will be given to college students to justify that teaching based on high preparation, is one of the main factors for a quality education. In the academic field it will contribute significantly to improve the teaching learning process in English language skills, in particular the skill of reading.

To sum up, the application of reading comprehension strategies will directly benefit the students of the UPEC English Centre in relation to the development of this skill and indirectly to students of other educative institution who benefit from reading this research work.

Keywords: Reading phases, reading comprehension, strategies, skilled readers, comprehension at literal level, comprehension at inferential level, comprehension at critical-evaluative Level.

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INTRODUCTION

This research aims to develop reading comprehension among college students through planned reading strategies. Chapter one poses an overview prior to reading comprehension which includes some fundamentals that readers bring to the text: knowledge of the writing system, knowledge of the language, ability to interpret and knowledge of the world. Moreover, certain factors that affect reading are mentioned, highlighting the following: the text, reader, context of the reading situation. Moreover, reading phases and their supportive strategies are included, describing: pre-reading, while reading and post reading strategies.

Next, chapter two presents the levels of reading comprehension; in order to develop true understanding, the text should be interpreted at different levels: literal, inferential and critical-evaluative.

Some researchers agree that reading comprehension is a process in which there is interaction among word identification, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement. On this regard, reading comprehension has been deemed as an active, dynamic, and growing process of searching for interrelationships in a text. Considering these facts, Chapter three presents a set of strategies for improving reading comprehension among college students that may promote successful comprehension of a text, depending on the particular reader, the particular text and the context in which the reading is going on. Each strategy describes specific activities to put into practice.

Chapter four includes a myriad of information about reading strategies for skilled readers and chapter five describes the experiences of reading comprehension conducted by Carchi State Polytechnic University.

It is noteworthy that this research will help to achieve the objective stated in the Higher Education Organic Law, Article 124 - Training in values and rights - "It is the responsibility of Higher Education System Institutions to provide their graduate students from any of the courses or programs, actual knowledge of their duties and rights as well as on the socio-economic, cultural and ecological reality of the country, **mastering a foreign language** and effective management of computer tools.

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CHAPTER I

READING: AN OVERVIEW PRIOR TO READING COMPREHENSION

A simple and provisional definition of reading is that "it is a process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written"(Williams, 1996, p. 2). According to this author the key word here is ´understands´ because merely reading aloud without understanding does not count as reading. In other words, asking language learners to read aloud, if a teacher already knows that they can read, is an activity of very limited value. There are far better ways of practicing pronunciation.

Furthermore, Williams claims that this definition of reading does not mean that a foreign learner needs to understand everything in a text because understanding is not an ´all or nothing´ process either. The reader does not necessarily need to look at everything in a given piece of writing and is able to arrive at understanding without looking at every letter and words; an efficient reader usually reads in groups of words, not word by word, far less letter by letter.

Feathers Karen (2004) considers that "reading is a process of constructing meaning in which the reader is an active participant. Meaning doesn't flow automatically from the text to the reader; rather, the text contains clues that the reader uses to generate meaning" (p. 26).

To understand how this works, Feathers explains how we learn language. All our knowledge about language is based on our experiences. We develop concepts of "cat," "dog," "house," and everything else from our encounters with objects, people, and events.

Additionally, in a language program reading should not be regarded merely as a way of 'stamping in' structures and vocabulary already met through listening and speaking. As texts are permanent (unlike speech), they give the learner the chance of grappling with his problems in his own time. Spoon-feeding the learner by limiting his reading to language he already knows does not allow this development to take place. On the other hand texts should not be too difficult or the learner will be discouraged.

All in all, reading is the ability to recognize the symbols in text and speak the words that contain these symbols. There are also many definitions taken from internet, some of them are compiled below.

1. Reading is making meaning from 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.

2. "Reading" is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. When we read, we use our eyes to receive written symbols (letters, punctuation marks and spaces) and we use our brain to convert them into words, sentences and paragraphs that communicate something to us.

3. Reading is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (reading comprehension). It is a means of language acquisition, of communication, and of sharing information and ideas.

4. Reading is not a straightforward process of lifting the words off the page. It is a complex process of problem solving in which the reader works to make sense of a text not just from the words and sentences on the page but also from the ideas, memories, and knowledge evoked by those words and sentences.

5. At the most basic level reading is the recognition of words. From simple recognition of the individual letters and how these letters form a particular word to what each word means not just on an individual level, but as part of a text.

6. Reading is the ability to correctly pronounce the words on the page. Source: What is Reading? at: http://www.teachreading.info/what-is-reading/ (21/08/2013).

All in all, ultimate aims for reading are that the learner should be able to read general texts with comprehension, read flexibly according to his purpose, be able to learn language and content from reading, and read with some degree of critical awareness. Moreover, from the previous definitions it can be inferred that certain elements are necessary to enable reading.

1.1 Fundamentals that a Readers Brings to the Text

Williams (1996) identifies the following factors (pp. 3-10)**:**

a. Knowledge of the Writing System

A writing system is a symbolic communication system that is always associated with spoken language. The effective reader has knowledge of the writing system because can recognize letters in printer´s form, e.g.a, b, c, etc., he can identify combinations of letters in spelling of words, and this helps him to recognize words.

It is assumed that the foreign language learner has already passed the stage of initial literacy in English, that is to say that he knows how to read in English. The real problem for the foreign learner is that he may not know many of the words in the text he is reading, and therefore cannot recognize them.

b. Knowledge of the Language

The effective reader knows the language of the text he is reading. He knows the content words and what they mean (though perhaps not all of them). He also knows the syntax (or grammar) of the language, that is to say the operation and effect of structural words, of word form, and of word order.

On the other hand, one of the principal problems of the foreign language learner is that his knowledge of the language is incomplete, and this may cause serious difficulty with some texts. In fact a fundamental difference between the native speaker and the foreign learner is that the former uses knowledge of the language to help him read, whereas the latter uses reading to help him learn the language.

c. Ability to Interpret

Understanding the 'plain sense' or obvious meaning of individual sentences is important, but it is not enough. The effective reader brings with him the ability to recognize the purpose of the text as a whole, to see how the text is organized, and to understand the relationship between sentences. He is able in fact to 'follow' the writer, and not simply understand the sentences. In a general sense, we may refer to this as the ability to interpret. In this context, Dawn Dodson (2010) considers that reading is "the ability to easily read and understand texts written in the language" at:http://www.lessonplanet.com/directory_articles/language_arts_lesson_plans/20_April_2010/383/ready_set_read_teaching_reading_fluency.(30/07/2013)

d. Knowledge of the world

Williams considers that all readers bring something with them to a text, in terms of a general stock of knowledge, sometimes termed 'knowledge of the world'. Whether it helps them to understand the text or not will of course depend on the nature of the text and the nature of their knowledge.

Besides, knowledge of the world does not only cover knowledge of a particular topic. It may include familiarity with different text types or knowledge of a particular culture or way of life. Newspaper articles, for instance, often assume the reader will have knowledge of the current political situation, or of the world of entertainment or sport. This can, of course, be a problem even for a reader who speaks the same language as the writer. However, for the foreign language learner the problem may be greater, for his cultural background may be quite different from that of the writer.

1.2 Factors that Affect Reading

Reading always takes place within a context and is specific to the context that surrounds the act of reading. According to Feathers Karen (2004) "Three factors: the text, the reader, and the context of the reading situation — influence reading. They are not, in fact, entirely separate. Rather, they overlap and interact to affect the reading process". (p. 23).

a. The Text

According to this author, the vocabulary, sentence structure, and organizational patterns of reading materials vary. Fictional narratives differ from poems and info texts. A history text is different from a science. Dorothy Hennings (2001) writes that each discipline has its own essential ideas or ways of knowing; that is, each subject area organizes the relevant information in a different way. The structures of each discipline are reflected in the organization of the texts of the subject area and require different types of reading. If these structures are unfamiliar to readers, they can cause difficulty.

Additionally, the readability of texts also varies. Some texts are well written and offer support for the reader. They use familiar sentence structures, are well organized, provide links between ideas, and define terms clearly. Other texts are not as well written and may be disorganized, contain sentences that are too simple

or too complex, and fail to define terminology or link major concepts. Texts such as these are not "reader-friendly," making comprehension difficult.

b. The Reader

Feathers (2004) also considers that the reader also affects the reading process. A reader's physical and emotional state affects how he approaches reading experiences. Is the reader tired? hungry? happy? stressed? Any one of these factors can make a difference in how readers approach texts.

Moreover, the reader doesn't operate in isolation but interacts with the reading material and the situation in which the reading occurs. A student whose parents are divorcing might be upset and unable to concentrate on reading a science text. On the other hand, the same student may eagerly read a story about a child of divorced parents or informational material about coping with divorce.

As a consequence, the prior knowledge of the reader is also important. A reader's familiarity with both the topic and the format of the text substantially influences his ability to understand. If both the topic and format are unfamiliar, however, the reader is likely to have difficulty comprehending. This is why so many of us have trouble with, for example, income tax forms.

It is assumed that readers learn a language by studying its vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, not by actually reading it. In this context, lower level learners read only sentences and paragraphs generated by textbook writers and instructors whilst good readers have developed the language skills needed to read extensively as well as integrate information in the text with existing knowledge, they are also motivated and have a flexible reading style, depending on what they are reading, good readers also read for a purpose. Defining what

actions good readers take while reading, that is to say which good reading habits they will use, builds great readers.

To sum up, "reading is a complex interaction between the text, the reader and the purposes for reading, which are shaped by the reader's prior knowledge and experiences, the reader's knowledge about reading and writing language and the reader's language community which is culturally and socially situated". Hughes, J.(2007). http://faculty.uoit.ca/hughes/Reading/ReadingProcess.html(28/07/2013)

c. The Context of the Reading Situation

"The context of the reading situation includes where the material is found, the physical location of the reader when reading, constraints imposed upon the reading, and the purpose for reading". (Feathers, 2004, p. 24).

Moreover, readers have different expectations of various types of material and these expectations influence the reading process. For example, readers expect newspapers to be easy to read as well as biased. They expect novels to focus on human events in chronological order and to be enjoyable. They expect textbooks to contain lists of facts, to have a logical organization, and to be boring and hard to read. Because of these expectations, readers approach various kinds of material differently.

On the other hand, the reader's physical location, according to Feathers, also makes a difference. Aspects of the physical location affecting comfort also influence the reading process. Am I in a comfortable cozy chair or seated in a hard chair with my book on a desk? Is the room too cold or too warm? How much noise surrounds me? These are vital questions to consider.

In addition, the context can also constrain processing. In schools, teachers often impose constraints on processing by setting reading-related tasks. Requiring readers to answer questions at the end of a chapter, fill in worksheets, find definitions, and make an outline focus attention on particular aspects of the text and suggest particular ways of reading. Students who are asked to fill in worksheets often avoid reading the entire text but skim to find the appropriate information.

The purpose for reading also forms part of the context of a situation. For example, stories are typically read for enjoyment, to experience a lived-through event, understand human characters and emotions, and recognize and appreciate the author's craft.

1.3 Reading Phases and their supportive strategies

a. Pre-reading Strategies

Pre-reading consists on examining a text superficially and rapidly to determine the main ideas or the plot. This process of skimming a text allows locating key ideas before reading a text from start to finish. Nordquist R. (2006) considers that pre-reading provides an overview that can increase reading speed and efficiency. On this regard, pre-reading involves looking at titles, chapter introductions, summaries, headings, subheadings, study questions, and conclusions. http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/Prereading.htm . Alan Jacobs (2011) considers that to be successful today, it not only becomes necessary to skim, but it becomes essential to skim well. http://grammar.about.com/od/pq/g/Prereading.htm.

In fact, **brainstorming, class discussions, semantic mapping, pre-questions, visual aids, advanced organizers, overviews, vocabulary previews, structural organizers, a purpose for reading, real life experiences,**

author consideration and KWL are some pre-reading strategies mentioned by Karla Porter (2005) at:

To emphasize this matter, Brassell D. and Rasinski T. (2008) consider that pre-reading strategies allow students to think about what they already know about a given topic and predict what they will read or hear.

Consider the following example of **KWL strategy:**

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

Table 1

Rattlesnakes

Know	Want to know	Learned
• Sharp fangs (D) • Poisonous (A) • Live in deserts (L) • Live in holes (L) • They make a rattling sound before they bite (A) • Diamondback is one type (D) • Eat mice (A)	• How are their fangs different from our teeth? • Are all rattlesnakes poisonous? • Will you die if a rattlesnake bites you? • Where does the rattling sound come from? • What medicine stops the poison? • Do any live in my city?	• Some rattlesnakes have hollow, hinged fangs that can swing forward and inject poison. (A) • All rattlesnakes are poisonous (A) • Often warn before biting by shaking the "rattles" on the end of their tail (A) • 28 varieties from Canada to South America (L) • Some bites can be

		fatal, especially to small children (P)
		• The only way to stop the poison is to Administer an antivenom (P)
Categories: Where they live—Location (L), What they do—Abilities (A), How they look—Description (D), How they affect people (P)		

Source: Teaching as Leadership (2009, p.65)

http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/SL_Ch4_2011.pdf.

Note: This three-column chart is a way to (1) bring students' prior knowledge about a topic to the forefront of their minds,(2) identify questions that they will look to answer while reading the text, thereby establishing a purpose for reading and building motivation to read, and (3) organize the information learned while reading.

Before students read any text, teachers can direct their attention to how a text is organized, teach unfamiliar vocabulary or other concepts, search for the main idea, and provide students with a purpose for reading or listening. Most importantly, teachers can use pre-reading strategies to increase students' interest in a text. Consider the following example of **Brainstorming strategy:**
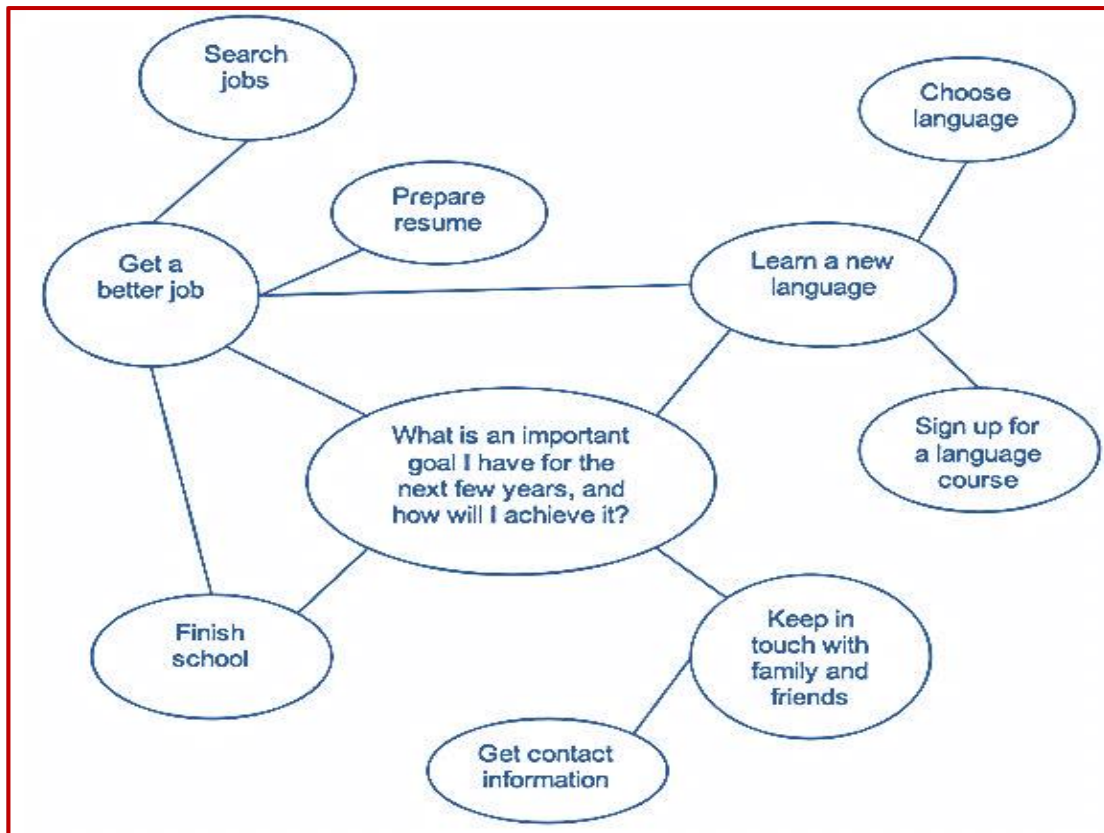
Figure 1

Brainstorming for the essay

Source: Purdue OWL Engagement.

Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/images/Idea.jpeg

Note: Brainstorming is a technique used in writing to present a specific topic and break down that topic into subtopics.

A derivation of **Brainstorming** is **Semantic Mapping**. It is a visual representation of knowledge and displays relationships between concepts or words by connecting new information with background knowledge (Johnson & Pearson, 1984). Semantic Mapping is a way to categorize information and depict key words graphically, allowing students to organize and integrate information.
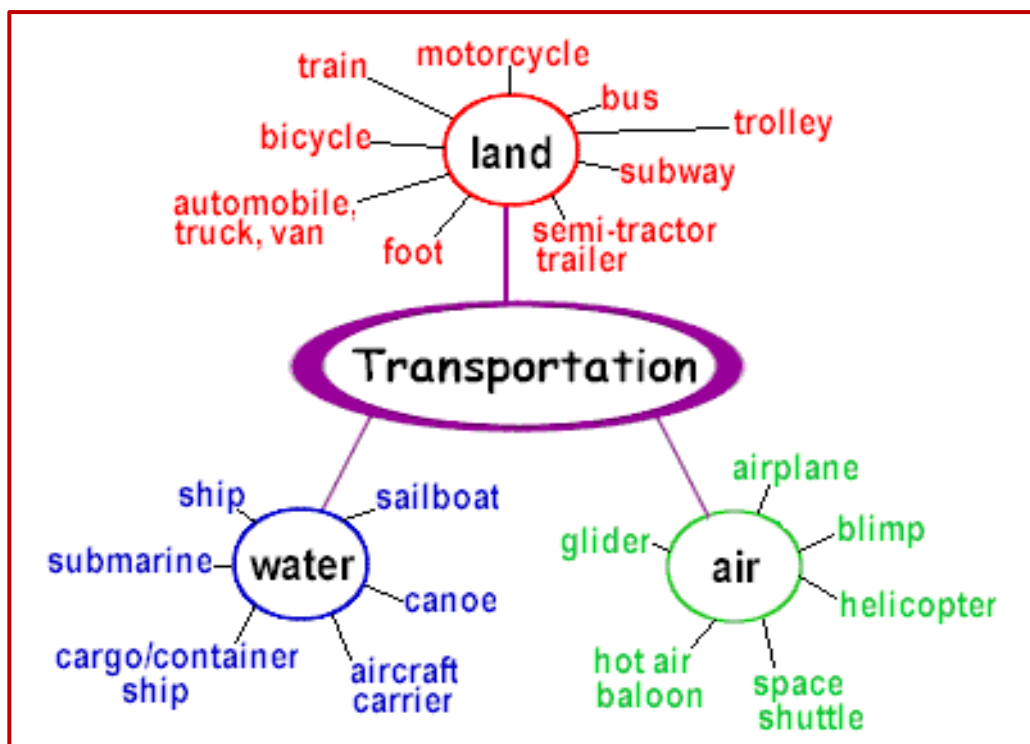
Figure 2

Semantic Map on transportation

Source: Skemens Education Solutions, INC. Retrieved from:

http://imavex.vo.llnwd.net/o18/clients/smekenseducation/images/Vocabulary/semantic.gif

Note: In Semantic mapping ideas are organized and controlled by the teacher.

Nevertheless, teachers have to deal with some common problems with reading materials. "Learners lack motivation; teachers are uncertain as to how they should carry out language preparation; teachers are unsure about selecting and devising reading-related activities" (Williams, 1996, p. 51).A good method of approaching these problems is to look at the reading session in terms of three phases: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading.

In other words, the aim of pre-reading is to arouse interest in the topic by drawing on the learners' knowledge of the world and on their opinions. It can also generate relevant vocabulary. It is carried out before learners have seen the text. When a teacher starts the lesson saying "please turn to page 34, read the passage

and answer the questions." is hardly likely to motivate the learners because as Williams (1996) claims: "What the pre-reading phase tries to do is:

1. To introduce and arouse interest in the topic
2. To motivate learners by giving a reason for reading
3. To provide some language preparation for the text." (p. 37)

All in all, this author claims that not all of these aims will be relevant for all texts. In any case, language preparation does not mean that the teacher should explain every possible unknown word and structure in the text, but that he should ensure that the learners will be able to tackle the text tasks without being totally frustrated by language difficulties. In other words language preparation can be carried out by the learners, as well as by the teacher. Visuals as diagrams, maps, photographs, drawing up of lists and oral and written questions may all play a part in pre- reading activities.

b. **While-reading Strategies**

This phase draws on the text, rather than the learner's ideas previous to reading. The aims of this phase according to Williams (1996, p. 38) are:

1. To help understanding of the writer's purpose
2. To help understanding of the text structure
3. To clarify text content

In this phase the learner may be asked to find the answers to questions given at the beginning of the text (pre-text questions), or to questions inserted at various points within the text. The learner may also be asked to complete diagrams or maps, make lists, take notes are other types of while-reading work. What the teacher needs to do is consider what the effect of these exercises is, and whether this corresponds to both his and his learners' aims.

As a rule, while-reading work should begin with a general or global understanding of the text, and then move to smaller units such as paragraphs, sentences and words. The reason for this is that the larger units provide a context for understanding the smaller units - a paragraph or sentence, for example, may help the reader to understand a word.

According to Castilleja, G. (2012) students are often told to underline or highlight "parts that stand out." She suggests teachers explicitly teach students what kinds of things to look for and highlight to set a purpose for reading. Castilleja cites Tovani (2004) who explains that "merely underlining text is not enough. Thinking about the text must accompany the underlining" (p. 69).

Firstly, Candillejas mentions **annotating** as a During Reading strategy. She claims that students can make their thinking visible by annotating. Annotations can be a paraphrasing of the information, identification of the main idea, or adding the students´ questions or reactions. Furthermore, readers are more likely to interact with the text because they engage the content if they are paraphrasing.

Consider the following example of **Annotating strategy:**

Table 2
Learning about electricity

Write Your Annotations Here
Definition: Electricity is a form of energy.

Description: It is produced by the movement of electrons.

3.1 Learning About Electricity

Electricity is a form of energy. It is produced by the movement of electrons. But do you know what actually happens when you flip a switch to turn on the light, or the computer, or the television set? Why don't all the lights go out in your house when one light bulb burns out? Electricity is very useful, but if people do the wrong thing, electricity can also hurt. In some cases it can even kill. Safety is key when it comes to electricity.

Electric Circuits

How does electricity flow? Electricity flows through paths, or electric circuits. Electrons travel through these paths, but only if they can move around the path and get back to where they started. If the path is broken, the electrons will not move.

A closed circuit allows electrons to travel through an unbroken path and back to where they started. An open circuit has a break in the path. Electrons will not move through an open circuit.

All circuits must contain three things: connecting conductors, an energy source, and a load. A conductor is a device, such as a wire, that allows electricity to pass easily through it. An **energy source**, such as a battery, is what gives the circuit its energy. A **load** is a device or appliance that uses the energy, such as a light bulb. Figure 3.2 shows the symbols for the basic parts of a circuit.

ScienceWise 11, (Toronto: Irwin Publishing, 2003).

Source: Think literacy. Cross Curricular Approaches. Retrieved from:

http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/studentsuccess/thinkliteracy/files/reading.pdf. pg.36

Note: Annotating is a strategy for remembering what one reads. It provides a tool for summarizing information and ideas, making connections, and seeing patterns and trends in course-related materials.

Moreover, if students look up from the page and are unable to annotate the text, they are thereby given a clue that they did not comprehend. Without this routine, many students tend to continue reading without ever assessing their own comprehension. With enough practice, a student can identify the main idea and write it in the margin.

As students continue, their annotations are not limited to the main idea but can also reflect the higher-order thinking skills usually practiced by good readers. Tovani (2004) states, "If I want readers to reuse and remember the information they read, I have to help them learn how to mark text" (p. 5). By guiding students to write their questions, predictions, reactions, and connections to the text on the text, we help them learn how to "hold their thinking" (p. 17) so they can use it later.

Secondly, Castilleja, G. (2012) mentions a second after reading strategy and calls it **Underline and Define Vocabulary on the Spot**. She considers that if in a test a word is underlined, a student will be asked in one way or another to define it. Because many words have multiple meanings, students must define the word as soon as they encounter it. In other words, the right definition is used, based on the context in which the word is used. She cites Vacca and Vacca (2007), "vocabulary knowledge is strongly related to text comprehension," and good readers "try to determine meaning of unfamiliar words and concepts in the text" (pp. 16, 17).

According to this fact, students should use context clues to infer the meanings of new words, and their definitions should be written in the margin so the students can refer to their notes when asked.

Consider the following example of this strategy:

How to Look at Television

_____T. W. ADORNO

DR. T. W. ADORNO, as Research Director during the past year of the Hacker Foundation of Beverly Hills, California, conducted the pilot study which is here published for the first time. Others involved in this study include Mrs. Bernice T. Eiduson, Dr. Merril B. Friend, and George Gerbner. Dr. Adorno has now returned to Germany where he has resumed his professorship in the Philosophy department at Frankfurt University and his position as co-director of the Institute of Social Research in Frankfurt.

THE EFFECT OF TELEVISION cannot be adequately expressed in terms of success or failure, likes or dislikes, approval or disapproval. Rather, an attempt should be made, with the aid of depth-psychological categories and previous knowledge of mass media, to crystallize a number of theoretical concepts by which the potential effect of television—its impact upon various layers of the spectator's personality—could be studied. It seems timely to investigate systematically socio-psychological stimuli typical of televised material both on a descriptive and psychodynamic level, to analyze their presuppositions as well as their total pattern, and to evaluate the effect they are likely to produce. This procedure may ultimately bring forth a number of recommendations on how to deal with these stimuli to produce the most desirable effect of television. By exposing the socio-psychological implications and mechanisms of television, often operating under the guise of fake realism, not only may the shows be improved, but, more important possibly, the public at large may be sensitized to the nefarious effect of some of these mechanisms.

We are not concerned with the effectiveness of any particular show or program; but, we are concerned with the nature of present-day television and its imagery. Yet, our approach is practical. The findings should be so close to the material, should rest on such a solid foundation of experience that they can be translated into precise recommendations and be made convincingly clear to large audiences.

Handwritten annotations (left margin):
- To use psychological / unconscious / non-physical methods to analyse the effect of T.V
- Study of unconscious motives + attitudes
- The act of believing / supposing in advance of knowledge
- Desirable for who?
- A false sense of reality
- Infamous for being wicked
- What are the concerns of present-day T.V?
  - violence?
  - sex?
  - profanity?

Handwritten annotations (right margin):
- Subjective analysis is not enough
- What concepts, which theorists?
- the study of relations between individuals + groups
- Same as psychoanalysis focuses on getting inside the head of individuals. to make sense of their relationships, behaviour and how they view the world
- made sensitively, emotionally aware of the current infamous ways of the mass media

Handwritten annotations (bottom):
- In what form can you make this clear?
- It would be hypocritical to use the very method you're criticising?
- How/Why would an audience believe such revolutionary recommendations if they are already so de-sentized to such media forms?

Figure 3

How to look at Television

Source: Contextual & Theoretical Studies. Retrieved from:
http://3.bp.blogspot.com/_IF847TDuKRw/S54_2KpW3oI/AAAAAAAAAiw/fc9C5IwoQgQ/s1600/P1040905.JPG

 Note: With this strategy readers indicate the importance and emphasize vocabulary.

c. Post-reading Strategies

On this stage Williams (1996, p. 39) claims that the aims of post-reading work are:

1. To consolidate or reflect upon what has been read
2. To relate the text to the learners' own knowledge, interests, or views.

Post-reading may also include any reactions to the text and to the while-reading work, as a consequence, learners say whether they liked it, and found it useful or not. The three phases need not be followed rigidly in every case, it they offer the teacher a framework which can help to overcome the problems outlined above. Moreover the pre- and post -reading phases generate activities which call on other skills, and help to integrate these skills with the reading. A useful suggestion would be to include guided questions for pre, during, and post reading as well as open-ended questions that help the reader ponder the text and think more critically, at a deeper level.

Block C. and Israel S. (2004, p. 154) claim that highly skilled readers use similar thought processes before, during, and after reading. They (a) adjust a reading goal according to their level of prior knowledge, (b) think strategically, (c) follow their intentions to the end of a passage, (d) monitor their comprehension, and (e) reflect on an author's purpose within the constraints of a particular genre and their own reading objective. Furthermore, recent research reports and panel syntheses agree that all readers should use these expert thinking processes. However, many less able readers will not do so unless their teachers become proficient in demonstrating these thinking processes.

On the other hand, Teaching as Leadership (2009) considers that independent readers are those who are constantly monitoring their understanding of the text as they read it. These individuals are predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing, connecting, and evaluating as they read, essentially engaging in a dialogue with

the author and themselves in their minds. This organization claims that before discussing specific pre-, during- and post-reading strategies, one overarching key to comprehension is the understanding of a text at the structural and organizational level. They also claim that teachers must teach students how to learn from a textbook that is replete with structural and organizational elements that either enhance comprehension or simply provide more confusing text on a page.

On this regard, students who can understand text structures, that is to say chapter titles, section headings and subheadings, bolded vocabulary, figures, captions, and keys, are much more able to access the information in a text. At: Teaching as Leadership (2009)
http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-readings/SL_Ch4_2011.pdf.
(06/09/2013).

This same source claims that the stage of the reading process after students have read is ripe with opportunities to build students' reading comprehension by means of post-reading strategies that teachers have found effective. The first one is called **Scales** and provides students with opportunities to articulate an opinion based on the themes, events, or concepts of a text. Once again, the best statements are those that aren't clearly true or false, but are somewhat debatable. In other words, readers are asked to determine how much they agree or disagree with each statement using the qualifiers strongly disagree, disagree, agree and strongly agree.

Consider the following example of **Scales chart strategy:**

Table 3

The Watsons Go to Birmingham

Determine how much you agree or disagree with each statement and mark that point on the continuum with an X. You will be asked to defend your statements in a group discussion, so think carefully!

1. Kenny and his family should not have gone to Birmingham, Alabama when they did.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

2. You can do some bad things and still be a good person. Consider Byron as you answer this.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

3. Throughout the book, Kenny calls his family The Weird Watsons. This was an accurate description of his family.

   Strongly disagree   Disagree   Agree   Strongly agree

Source: Teaching as Leadership (2009, p.75). Retrieved from:
http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/SL_Ch4_2011.pdf.
Note: This strategy provides students with opportunities to articulate an opinion based on the themes, events, or concepts of a text.

In this same context, Teaching as Leadership (2009) calls the second post-reading strategy **Very Important Points (VIPs)**. It makes readers accountable for picking out the key concepts in a passage by having students share their notes on the ideas after the class has read a text. As students read, they write questions on sticky-notes about what they have read. In addition, readers mark the three most

important points of the text. Then, as a post-reading activity, students work in groups of three or four, have a discussion and answer to their questions. It is critical to have students justify what they have answered or marked as important.

Consider the following example of **Very Important Points strategy:**
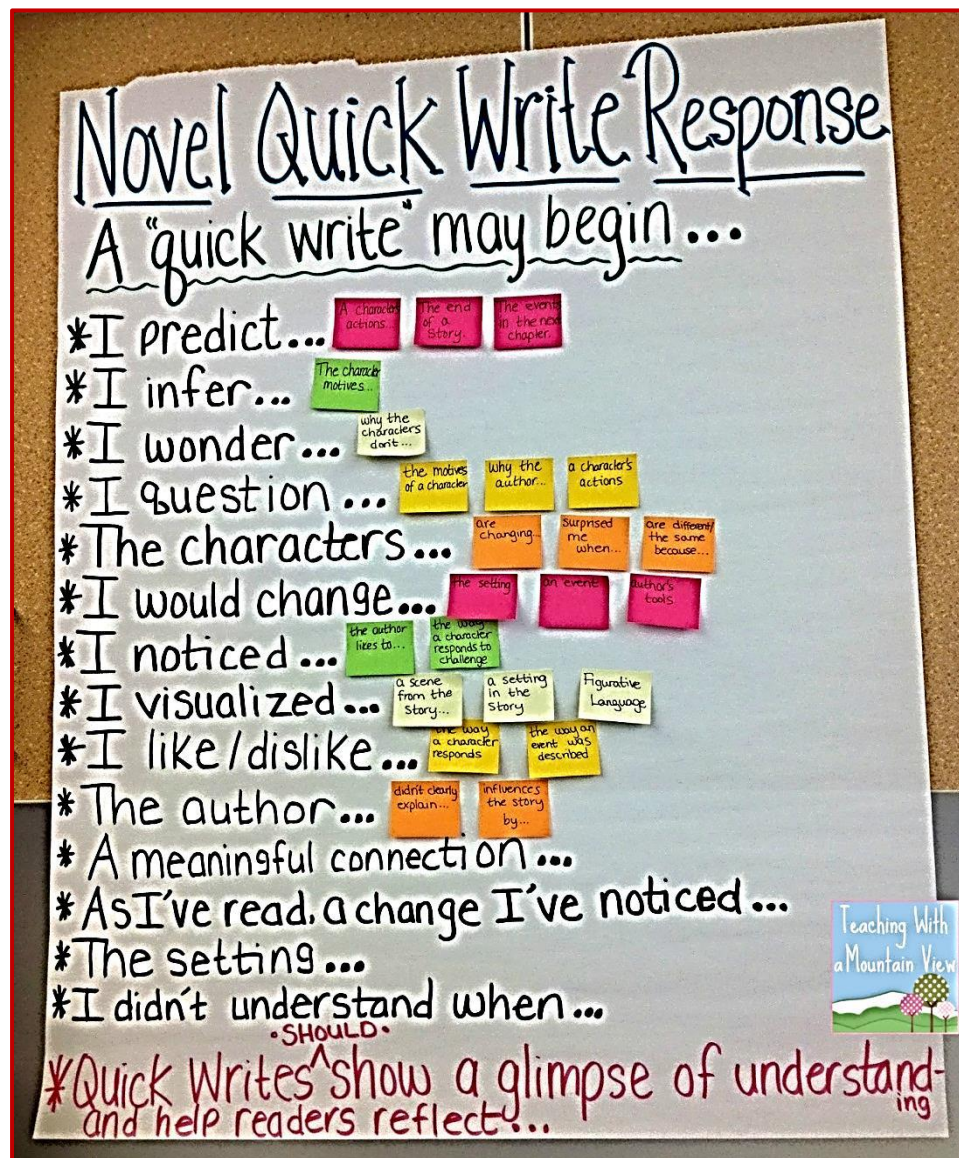
Figure 4

Use sticky notes to write Very Important Points (VIPs).

Note: This strategy provides students with opportunities to share their notes on the ideas after the class has read a text.

To sum up, pre-reading strategies prepare students for learning by activating their prior knowledge about the topic featured in the text. During-reading strategies teach comprehension by making connections, generating questions, reflecting on the information in the text and determining importance by guiding the reader to use proficient reader strategies. After reading strategies clarify their understanding of the text connecting the old and new knowledge and help students frame it in some way to their lives. At: Before, During, and After Reading Strategies http://www.smoran.ednet.ns.ca/Reader'sworkshop/before_during_after_reading.htm (30/08/2013). Following is a chart presenting a summary of reading strategies:

Table 4

Reading Phases and their supportive strategies.

Pre-reading strategies

Brainstorming, class discussions, semantic mapping, pre-questions, visual aids, advanced organizers, overviews, vocabulary previews, structural organizers, a purpose for reading, real life experiences, author consideration, KWL.

While-reading strategies

Annotating
Underline and Define Vocabulary on the Spot

Post-reading strategies Scales Very Important Points (VIPs)

Note: This chart summarizes Reading Phases and their supportive strategies.

CHAPTER II
READING COMPREHENSION

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. Rayner (2001, p. 31) claims that this understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message.

Firstly, researchers agree that reading comprehension is a process. "It is the interaction among word identification, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement" (Cunningham et al. 2004, p. 186). According to Prado (2011, p. 35) "The most basic part of comprehension is word identification". She claims that a student learns to decode words at the beginning and starts to apply rules about how words should look and sound. As they continue learning how to read, word identification turns into not only decoding words, but learning about the meanings of words and their positions in sentences. They also begin to gain an understanding of how all these words fit together to form a piece of information that will hopefully be of interest or use to them.

Secondly, another important component of reading comprehension is the activation of prior knowledge or making connections while reading. Readers must be able to draw from their experiences to apply what they are reading. Yang (2006) considers that if a student is not able to activate the schema necessary for a specific piece of text, his or her comprehension will be either distorted or greatly hindered. In this context, young students will, at first, activate their schema

(background knowledge and experience) and then, as they grow as readers, they strengthen and build on it.

In this context, Prado (2011) says that this is the reason why individuals may read a book several times and be able to gain different meanings and perspectives every time they read it. They are bringing new experiences to a text every time they read because their lives are constantly evolving. This "layering of experiences also increases their ability to gain meaning from a piece of text" (Zimmerman &Hutchins, 2003, p. 45).

Noticeably, (Curtis, 2002; Gersten, Fuchs, Williams, & Baker, 2001; Kamil, 2003; NICHD, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002) are cited by Hock (2005, p.193)) who claims that reading comprehension is the ultimate goal of any reading activity, especially functional literacy tasks. For this author reading comprehension is a collective term that describes the result of grasping the meaning from a text with one's intellect-a task that involves many skills.

In addition, Lewis M. & Tregenza J. (2007, p. 24) talk about the importance of helping students develop reading comprehension – from the very early stages of learning to read to becoming fluent readers. They claim that understanding what they read is at the heart of the reading process, for without it reading becomes a purposeless activity. Understanding a text also impacts upon a reader's motivation and engagement. If a student struggles to understand what they have read, they are unlikely to find reading a rewarding and enjoyable activity.

Also, to achieve reading comprehension "the reader employs skills such as identifying the main idea of a passage, summarizing the content of a text, generating questions about the information in the text and looking for clues that answer those questions". (Hock, 2005, p. 193). This author points out that readers also draw inferences from the text and perhaps even create visual images of the ideas or processes presented in it in order to achieve comprehension. Different

reading comprehension skills are required when reading expository and narrative text (e.g., deleting redundant information, deleting trivial information, locating topic sentences, detecting valid arguments in text.

Yang (2006, p. 313) claims that for decades, a great amount of studies have been done to investigate the influences of reading strategies on readers' comprehension. He thinks that since the 1970s, reading comprehension has no longer been considered as a static and passive process in decoding words and recoding meanings of individual words or phrases. Instead, reading comprehension has been deemed as an active, dynamic, and growing process of searching for interrelationships in a text.

Finally, "the emphasis of constructing meaning in reading process rather than reading products directs many researchers and educators to collect information on readers' cognitive processes; that is, their reading strategies" (Yang, 2006, p. 314). He also cites Carrel when assuring "as research evidence indicates, use of certain reading strategies does not always lead to successful reading comprehension, while use of other strategies does not always result in unsuccessful reading comprehension". (1992, p. 168).

To sum up, "strategies may not be inherently good or bad for a given reader. Rather, they may or may not promote successful comprehension of a text, depending on the particular reader, the particular text, the context in which the reading is going on, and the choice of other strategies in conjunction with the chosen one" (Cohen, 1986, pp. 132–133).

2.1 Levels of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is defined as the level of understanding of a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message. Rayner, K. (2001).

The understanding of a text is a fact in which an author interacts with a reader. The author communicates ideas and a reader interprets the author's message. To make this interaction possible, the Ecuadorian Ministry of Education (2006) considers that readers must activate the knowledge they have about the subject, the experiences they have acquired throughout their life, the knowledge they have of their maternal language and the worldview that has been configured with their knowledge and experience. The understanding a text or oral speech is always an interactive act, not a unidirectional act in which a transmitter communicates something that should be understood by other. To have a true understanding, the text should be interpreted at different levels: literal, inferential and critical-evaluative. Understanding a text in the three levels mentioned needs a process.

a. Comprehension at Literal Level

First of all, understanding a text at the literal level is to understand everything that the author explicitly communicated through this. That is, to understand all the words in it (or at least the words that are essential to understand the meaning of the text), understanding all the sentences that are written in it and understand each paragraph to get a complete picture of what the author has written.

To understand a text at the literal level, the reader uses all the vocabulary that has acquired since he was born. He also relies on the different meanings a word can have in the colloquial or everyday use, in certain regions, or in certain contexts. Literal understanding draws on intuitive or academic knowledge to know how your native language works, how sentences and paragraphs are structured, what certain terms mean in a culture or in a language in particular and also relies on common sense to identify how are set certain relations between ideas.

b. Comprehension at Inferential level

When a reader is able to give an account of what the author wanted to communicate that is a comprehension at inferential level. This does not mean it is a linear process in which first a person understands what the author says and then interprets what he meant. It is a process in which the reader is always moving between different levels of understanding. The reader, thanks to its competence and linguistic knowledge reads fluently and with no need to stop to think about what the author says.

In addition, only when faced with a difficulty to understand what the author says, the reader is forced to concentrate on the literal level of understanding. At that time the reader consciously uses some strategy to understand a word or a sentence. When the reader encounters a word that he does not understand, consciously works some of the strategies to extract its meaning (literal level). Once approaching the meaning of that word, he comes again to read and get an overall understanding of the text, making inferences and evaluating what the text says. If the reader encounters a sentence that does not understand the first time he reads it, so consciously focuses on using some strategy to understand that sentence (literal level) and when he is able to express the idea of the author in a clear way, returns to the level of interpretation of the text. "Understanding a text at an inferential level means to interpret everything that the author wants to communicate, but that sometimes he does not explicitly say or write." (Ecuadorian Ministry of Education, 2006).

On this regard, the reader can understand why the author wants to communicate. This means that the author gives clues about certain ideas that are not explicit in the text. The author communicates these ideas indirectly. The reader takes the items that appear explicit in the text, establish relationships between them and finally infers and extracts those ideas that the author explicitly embodied, but that he wanted to communicate. To perform this kind of understanding, the reader uses a lot of knowledge he possesses as efficient user of his tongue. Such knowledge is of some elements and operating rules of his language such as how

sentences are constructed, what certain expressions mean in his culture, the way of expressing in his culture, the use of particular types of text and its structure. That is, the reader must draw on his knowledge and experience to interpret what the author does not explicitly say.

As already mentioned, the understanding of a text is not a linear process, in which literal comprehension is understood first and then the inferential and finally the critical-evaluative. It is rather a process in which one level interacts with another one. What is important to note is that the levels of comprehension inferential and critical-evaluative are possible only if there is a literal understanding of the text.

c. Comprehension at Critical-evaluative Level

The MEC (2006) considers that understanding a text at critical-evaluative level means to value, project and judge both the content of what one author states in his writing as well as the inferences or relationships that can be established from what appears in the text produced by an author. These judgments, evaluations and projections should have a support, argument or rationale. To understand a text at this level, the reader must use his common sense, his ability to establish logical relationships, his knowledge of the text or on the subject of the text, his life experience as a reader, his scale of values, his personal criteria on what the text deals with. The reader uses all these elements to make a stand in front of what the author says or expresses in the text and so make projections about what might involve or happen.

CHAPTER III

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

Lei S. et al. (2010) consider that college student graduates are not necessarily good readers. Even though college students are reading advanced academic material, it does not mean that they always comprehend the information.

Comprehension in textbooks, scholarly books, and research journal articles, along with identification of important information can be problematic for college students. Reading is fundamental in all academic disciplines. Many college instructors do not see that teaching students reading skills as part of their job, and that reading required college-level textbooks and scholarly books are not different from reading general (non-academic) materials. These instructors also assume that students have developed proper reading skills from previous academic years. However, instructors do not realize that students may often experience difficulty in reading academic subject matter and in comprehending what they have read, resulting in low rates of student success and retention, along with lowered academic standards. (p. 30).

On this regard, these authors claim that there are many strategies, to be developed both in class and at home, to improve reading comprehension. Instructors can improve comprehension through non-reading related information such as background knowledge or experiences, homework and class work, and

learning aides. Instructors can also teach students how to use other strategies including the SQ3R method, peer teaching, encoding, and reading flexibility.

Table 5

An overview of improving reading comprehension among college students

Major strategy
3.1 Background Knowledge and Experience Lectures Class discussions Instructional videos Computer programs
3.2 Providing homework and Class Work Class-related topics Practice exercises
3.3 Providing Learning Aide by Instructors Study guide from textbook Quizzes Textbook pedagogical aides Handouts Learning packet
3.4 The SQ3R Method Survey Question Read Recite Review

3.5 Using Peer-Teaching 　　Cooperative learning 　　Peer-assisted instruction
3.6 Encoding 　　Outline 　　Concept Mapping
3.7 Reading Flexibility 　　Adjust speed and style of reading

Source: Lei, S., Rhinehart, P. et al (2010). Reading Improvement. Department of Educational Psychology. University of Nevada (p. 31)

Note: This chart summarizes mayor strategies for improving reading comprehension among college students.

3.1 Background Knowledge or Experiences

Lei S. et al. (2010, p. 31) claim that background knowledge are non-reading experiences that college teachers can use to facilitate and maximize student learning new materials. In this context, **lectures** are one of the primary teaching modes that have been in existence for a long time and are a successful method in improving reading comprehension. Because students can get overwhelmed easily with text-based material, the instructor's lectures are an overview of important information taken out of the text.

Classroom discussions encourage instructors to engage students in interactions to promote analysis, reflection and critical thinking; students get involved in what they are learning, encourage thinking, reasoning, and comprehension of important ideas, they also stimulate students to listen and evaluate the material being discussed, giving them the opportunity to bring up their own thoughts and ideas. These discussions lay the foundation for what

students will be reading, giving them the background knowledge and concepts to have a clear understanding of what's in the textbook chapter.

Consider the following picture that shows the strategy **Class Discussion**:

Figure 5
Class discussion
Source: The power of group discussion:
http://esol.britishcouncil.org/sites/esol/files/imagecache/main_image/group_discussion_iStock_000024035586XSmall.jpg
Note: Class discussion is a primary tool for language development. Students learn new language and develop new communication strategies.

(Choi and Johnson, 2005) are cited by Lei Simon (2010, p. 32) who claim that **video instruction** is thought to be important in problem-based learning. Video instruction is able to convey characters, settings, and action in a more interesting way, as well as can portray more complex and interconnected problems. This technological tool enhances interactions and activities in a constructivist approach

and boosts learning and comprehension. Moreover, there is a significant difference in learners' motivation in terms of attention between the video- based instruction and traditional text-based instruction. All in all, a critical attribute of video instruction is the ability to use both auditory and visual symbol systems which get students involved by acting out real situations that students can relate to, and therefore give a clear picture of what they are trying to convey.

Kim, A., et al., (2006) are cited by Lei Simon (2010, p. 33) they consider that many instructors in the science and math fields use **computer programs** because they can aide in the process of learning by showing a detailed way of solving a problem. They also have the ability to teach students at their own pace, provide choices in learning paths, reading passages, reading level options, and encourage a variety of practice exercises to be used. For these reasons, computer-assisted programs provide students with an interactive learning environment intended to maintain their interest, while teaching them how to apply comprehension strategies as they read expository text passages.

Noticeably, computer programs can help students with learning disabilities because they have not developed the ability to skillfully apply comprehension strategies. Finally, computer-assisted comprehension can be used in aiding to improve reading comprehension in college courses.

3.2 Providing homework and Class Work

A **homework assignment** refers to tasks given to students by their teachers to be completed outside the class. Lei S. et al. (2010, p. 33) consider that college students should be provided with sufficient homework and class work in order to help improve reading comprehension in their courses. They cite (Sherfield et al., 2005) to claim that critical reading and thinking skills require active reading. Being active readers mean students have to engage with the text, both mentally and physically. On this regard, students should skim ahead, jump back, and highlight

the text when they are studying. Additionally, they should make specific observations about the text and pre-view the material prior to actually reading it.

Consider the following example of **Class Work strategy:**

Table 6

The English Language

Note: reading exercises are categorized in different topics and levels and are aimed to developing this skill.

In relation to **class work**, teachers should provide class-related topics that are exciting and interesting. The best instructors tell stories related to topic; when students are taking a quiz or exam, they will recall the story associated with the lecture to recall the information. **"Practice exercises** are also essential to improve reading comprehension in college courses. Practice exercises in class and homework help students to remember the information for quizzes and final exams."
 (Lei S. et al., 2010, p. 34)

3.3 Providing Learning Aide by Instructors

Learning aides or **study guides** are tools used to reinforce and increase comprehension of information. Generally speaking, they condense all of the study materials into manageable sections. Moreover, they identify, explain and demonstrate relationships between ideas and concepts and create practical examples to facilitate and maximize student understanding of the course material. Some of these study guides include **quizzes, textbook pedagogical aides, handouts and learning packets**. Lei S. et al. (2010, p. 34) consider that study guides are instructional tools that are used to aide students in the acquisition of content information.

Study guides, however, are an independent review by students of the academic material. Khogali (2004) states that study guides serve as a powerful tool to help students manage their own learning. In order for these students to comprehend reading material effectively and efficiently, lecturers should provide guidance with the concepts presented in the assigned text readings. These learning aides can be used to introduce new content vocabulary, guide content-specific reading, review newly introduced content concepts, integrate new content with previously learned

content, and practice specific unit skills. Thus, study guides assist college students with comprehension of course material.

However, Gurung (2003) has shown that there is no significant positive correlation between the use of study guides and performance on exams. The study guides contain outlines, chapter reviews, key terms, practice test questions, online quizzes, group exercises, and paper assignments. Gurung concludes that the outcome is due to assessment methods that do not test the other forms of learning that study aides provide. (p. 34).

(Gurung, 2003) has advised that instructors should provide explicit guidelines on how to use different pedagogical aides because some students may simply misuse the study guides and has cautioned students from spending too much time on some aides at the expense of studying other important material or working on understanding the material. (p. 35).

Table 7

Quiznet: University Vocabulary

BBC Learning English
Quiznet
University vocabulary

1. Which of the following is NOT correct? "I can't come out tonight, I have to _____ my essay tomorrow morning and I've only just started it!"
a) hand in
b) hand out
c) submit
d) give in

2. Professor Lansdowne's a great speaker. Although there are 150 people listening to his _____, you feel like he's talking directly to you.
a) presentation
b) lecture
c) seminar
d) tutorial

3. Which informal verb means 'to study very hard'? "I'll really have to _____ the books this weekend."
a) study
b) read
c) hit
d) learn

4. What do you call a weekly meeting of students and a tutor, who come together to discuss an aspect of the course?
a) A presentation
b) A lecture
c) A seminar
d) A tutorial

ANSWERS:

1. Which of the following is NOT correct? "I can't come out tonight, I have to _____ my essay tomorrow morning and I've only just started it!"

a) hand in – You can 'hand in', 'submit' or 'give in' an essay.
b) hand out – When something is 'handed out' it is distributed, e.g. "Could you hand out these papers to the class please?"
c) submit – You can 'hand in', 'submit' or 'give in' an essay.
d) give in – You can 'hand in', 'submit' or 'give in' an essay.

2. Professor Lansdowne's a great speaker. Although there are 150 people listening to his _____, you feel like he's talking directly to you.

a) presentation – A presentation is usually given by one student to other members of the course and a tutor who then go on to discuss the issues raised.
b) lecture – Correct. In a lecture, the professor or lecturer talks to a large group of students in a lecture theatre. The students listen and take notes and may ask questions at the end.
c) seminar – In a seminar, a small group of students meets with their tutor on a weekly basis to discuss an aspect of the course.
d) tutorial – A tutorial is a one-to-one meeting with a tutor to discuss the student's progress on the course and whether they are having any problems.

3. Which informal verb means 'to study very hard'? "I'll really have to _____ the books this weekend."

a) study – You can study a book, but which verb means to study hard?
b) read – You can read a book, but which verb means to study hard?
c) hit – Correct. If you 'hit the books' you study very hard. Note that this is used more in American English and is informal.
d) learn – Which verb means to study hard?

4. What do you call a weekly meeting of students and a tutor, who come together to discuss an aspect of the course?

a) A presentation – A presentation is usually given by one student to other members of the course and a tutor who then go on to discuss the issues raised.
b) A lecture – In a lecture, the professor or lecturer talks to a large group of students in a lecture theatre. The students listen and take notes and may ask questions at the end.
c) A seminar – Correct. In a seminar, a small group of students meets with their tutor on a weekly basis to discuss an aspect of the course.
d) A tutorial – A tutorial is a one-to-one meeting with a tutor to discuss the student's progress on the course and whether they are having any problems.

Source: http://www.bbclearningenglish.com

Note: a quiz is a test of knowledge in the form of a short or rapid series of questions .

3.4 The SQ3R Method

The **SQ3R method** was developed by Francis Robinson in his 1946 book "Effective Study". It is an acronym which stands for **S**urvey (or **S**kim), **Q**uestion, **R**ead, **R**ecite (or **R**ecall) and **R**eview.

The University of Illinois website and Fraser, L. (1996) http://www.at-bc.ca/Doc/Kwantlen%20Sq3R%20Reading.pdf. mention that it is a way to read academic material such as textbooks, articles, research studies or manuals and increase comprehension of what students are reading and improve their ability to recall it. It consists of the following five steps:

Survey or Skim

Skim the following: the title of the chapter, the introduction, the table of contents and any illustrations, charts or graphs and the summary paragraph. Note any unknown vocabulary and find a definition. Most importantly, skim the section headings and the first sentences of each paragraph to find the main points that will be developed. This orientation should not take more than a few minutes (make a conscious effort to look *only* at the headings, etc.) but will help you to organize the ideas as you read them later.

Consider the following example of **Skimming chart strategy:**

Table 8

Skimming to Preview Text

What is it?	When you SKIM, you read quickly to get the main idea of a paragraph, page, chapter, or article.
Why do I skim?	Skimming allows you to read quickly to get a general sense of a text so that you can decide whether it has useful information for you. You may also skim

	to get a key idea. After skimming a piece, you might decide that you want or need to read it in greater depth.
How do I skim?	1. Read the first few paragraphs, two or three middle paragraphs, and the final two or three paragraphs of a piece, trying to get a basic understanding of the information. 2. Some people prefer to skim by reading the first and last sentence of each paragraph, that is, the topic sentences and concluding sentences. 3. If there are pictures, diagrams, or charts, a quick glance at them and their captions may help you to understand the main idea or point of view in the text. 4. Remember: You do not have to read every word when you skim. 5. Generally, move your eyes horizontally (and quickly) when you skim.

Source: Think literacy. Cross Curricular Approaches.

http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/SL_Ch4_2011.pdf.

Note: This strategy asks readers to read quickly a text to get a few (but not all) of the details.

Question:

Turn the first heading, or the first sentence of the first paragraph, into a question. This will arouse your curiosity and so increase your active involvement and comprehension, and the question will make important points stand out while explanatory detail is recognized as such. Turning a heading into a question can be

done instantly upon reading the heading, but it demands a conscious effort on your part to make this a query for which you must read to find the answer.

Read:

Reading is the most important part of the SQ3R method. Students can record notes in the book margins or use a separate notebook. Recording notes will help students to understand the authors' ideas and concepts. Read to answer questions, i.e., to the end of the first headed section. This is not a passive plodding along each line, but an active search for the answer. Underline only key words, never whole paragraphs. Use a dictionary if necessary to look up unfamiliar vocabulary. The reader should definitely have in mind what he wants to learn as he reads each section and not just passively read it line by line.

Recite:

Having read the first section, look away from the book and try briefly to recite in your own words the answer to your question (aloud, if possible). Students should reflect on what they have read, including reciting answers to questions they asked during the survey portion. If you can do this you know what is in the section; if you can't, skim the section again and repeat the exercise of reciting. An excellent way to do this reciting from memory is to jot down cue phrases in outline form on a sheet of paper. Make these notes very brief.

Review

When the chapter or selection has thus been completely read, look over your notes to get a bird's-eye view of the points and their relationship to one another. Check your memory by reciting the major points under each heading and the sub-points under each major point. You can do this by covering up the notes and trying to recall the information. Review daily during the period of time before your exam. Through review, students can reflect on their reading comprehension and retention as well as reorganize the reading in a way that will make sense to them. Moreover, they reflect on their answers to the proposed questions.

To sum up, these five steps of the SQ3R Method, if applied and practiced, should result in an increase in reading comprehension, an improved ability to identify important points and better retention of the material.

3.5 Using Peer-Teaching

Peer teaching is the process by means of which a skilled pupil with a teacher's guidance helps one or more students at the same grade level learn a skill or concept, assuming that the knowledge and experience of the student teacher is superior to that of his/her partner.

Goldschmid B. (1976) considers that peer teaching has gained momentum in higher education because "students who tutor other students profit not only on a cognitive level (i.e., become more expert in the subject they are teaching), but also on an interpersonal, affective one: their self-esteem increases and their attitude towards teaching and learning in general becomes more positive". (p. 26).

On the other hand, those who are being tutored benefit from this form of individualized instruction. Students may be more willing to attempt difficult tasks when placed in pairs than when alone and be more creative. A possible negative result of this kind of cooperation could be an increase in problem-solving time. Another important cognitive benefit from peer teaching and learning experiences may be improved retention. Conceptual development may also be enhanced by peer teaching as was demonstrated by Murray (1972).

The author mentions that on the affective side, students have expressed great satisfaction and enjoyment in the peer teaching situation. Alternating between "teacher" and "student" roles reinforces the idea that students, especially in the university, can be autonomous and assume at least some responsibility for their own instruction. Such an attitude also fosters in the students the belief that they can themselves muster resources for their own learning and thus be better prepared for life after college.

Consider the following example that describes a **Peer teaching** process**:**
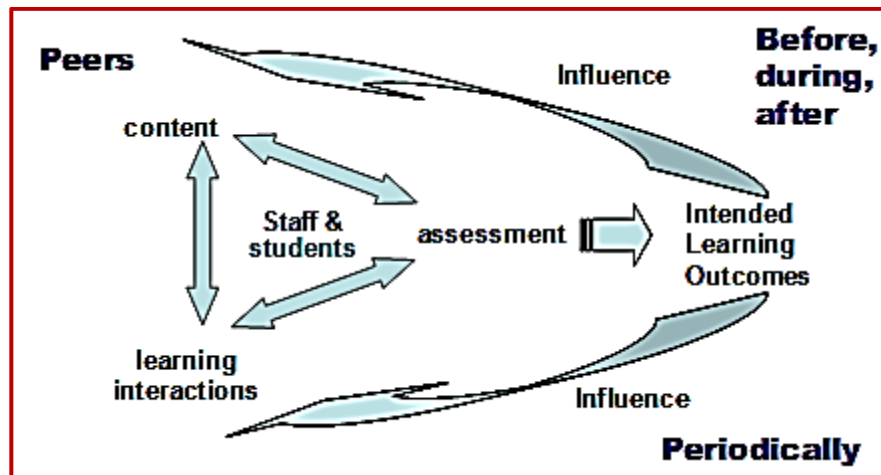
Graphic 6

Peer teaching and assessment

Source: What can peers evaluate?.

Note: This strategy provides good results through planning and preparation. Learning and teaching interactions as well as critical review improve and enhance teaching.

Furthermore, peer teaching must be subject to continuous evaluation. Students can evaluate their own progress and check the performance of their peers as well as provide constant feedback to their teachers with respect to the instructional materials and learning environment.

Lei S. et al. (2010, p. 37) cite an example of reading practice by means of peer teaching. First, the group reads a portion of textbook chapter silently, and then the peer teacher asks a question about what they just read. The group discusses the reading and assists each other with any questions or clarification if needed. Meanwhile, the actual teacher of the class starts off the group discussion and offers much help. Through time, the teacher reduces the assistance that is given to

the group until the group is guiding the entire discussion on their own. Students are also able to look at the reading and make future predictions about what comes next. Higher or average performing students are paired with a student who achieves lower results based upon a pretest performance. This approach allows students to ask questions about the assigned reading together in a group.

3.6 Encoding

Lei S. et al. (2010, p. 38) consider that the two major techniques of improving encoding are the use of **outlines and concept mapping** because research studies have shown that the use of an outline and the implementation of concept mapping have shown positive correlations to improved reading comprehension. Structurally, the use of an outline presents the visual organization of a textbook that function to prepare readers for identification of major topics and relevant information within the text. This identification leads to meaningful storage of new material in long-term memory. The aim of an outline is to help writers organize their thinking and information they have gathered. Some writers revise their outlines while they draft, others do it after they have finished revising their papers.

Consider the following example of **APA Outline Format Example:**

Table 9
The College Application Process

I. Choose Desired Colleges

    A. Visit and evaluate college campuses

    B. Visit and evaluate college websites

       1. look for interesting classes

       2. note important statistics

       a. student/faculty ratio

       b. retention rate

II. Prepare Application

   A. Write Personal Statement

      1. Choose interesting topic

         a. describe an influential person in your life

           (1) favorite high school teacher

           (2) grandparent

      2. Include important personal details

         a. volunteer work

         b. participation in varsity sports

   B. Revise personal statement

III. Compile resume

   A. List relevant coursework

   B. List work experience

   C. List volunteer experience

      1. tutor at foreign language summer camp

      2. counselor for suicide prevention hotline

Source: http://examples.yourdictionary.com/apa-outline-format-examples.html

Note: The outline is a logical and graphical synthesis that points relationships and dependencies between main and supporting ideas. Roman numerals are used for the main headings in the outline, and capital letters are used for the sub-headings. Inside the sub-headings Arab numerals and lower case letters are used, in that order followed by Arab numerals in parenthesis.

Consider the following example of **Concept Mapping:**
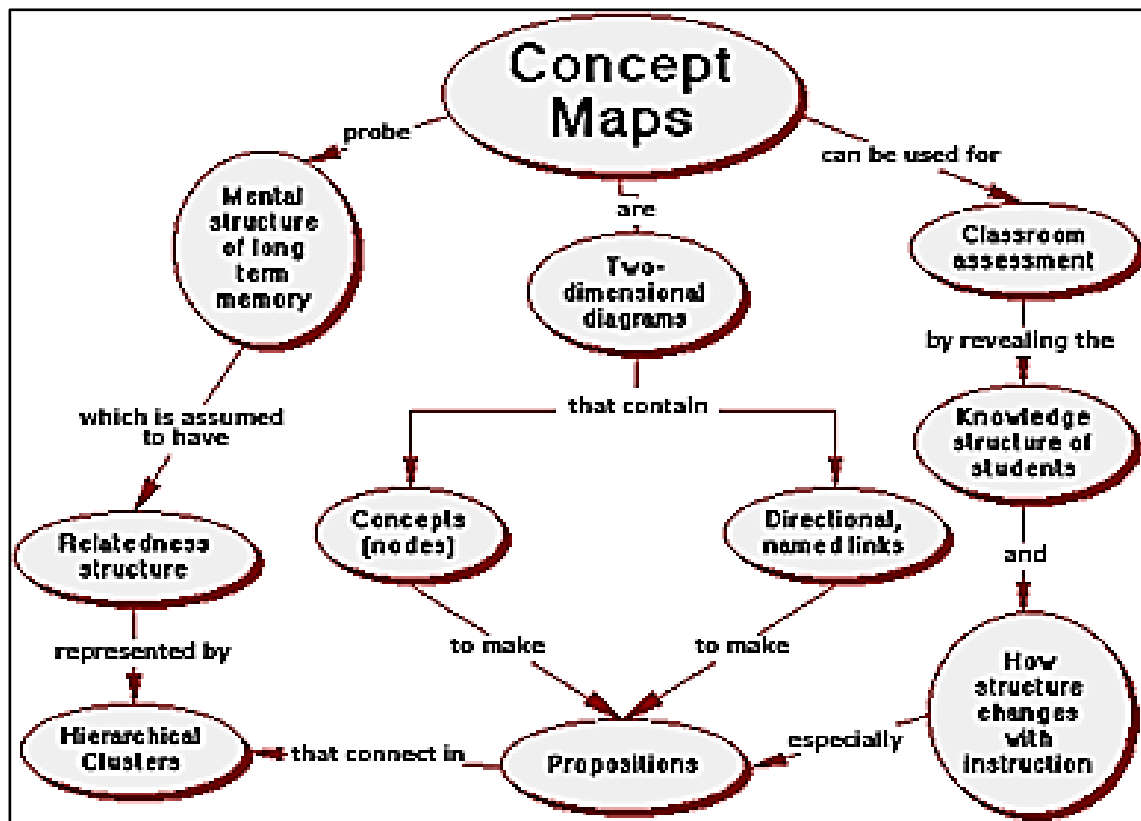
Figure 7

Concept Map structure

Source: http://www.flaguide.org/cat/conmap/conmapf1.gif

Note: A concept map is a diagram that depicts suggested relationships between concepts within boxes or circles which are connected with labeled arrows in a downward-branching hierarchical structure. The technique for visualizing these relationships among different concepts is called concept mapping.

56

Concept mapping, they say, is a schematic tool that allows college students to graphically represent their knowledge. The concept map graphically depicts an inclusive main concept to which connections to several other general concepts are shown by lines of direct and indirect relationship. The network of concepts moves downward to show differences in main to more specific concepts. This tool helps students diagram their knowledge of key concepts, and demonstrates their understanding of relationships among them. It turns out to be an effective learning tool for college students who have more complex experiences and more accumulations of knowledge than much younger-aged students who are juvenile in their academic endeavors. Moreover, concept mapping can also benefit college instructors in identifying any student misconceptions and improve in student understanding of course material.

3.7 Reading Flexibility

White, H. (2004) is cited by Lei Simon (2010, p. 40) considers that college students need to be guided through the course information and must be given a purpose for reading the passage of information. Their thinking needs to be stimulated, their curiosity needs to be aroused, and they need to be assisted with major concepts and vocabulary. In this context, they must learn to adjust their speed and style of reading to their reading objectives and the type of materials to be read. College instructors can give students insight on how to identify which materials to use for different types or reading speeds and styles.

CHAPTER IV

READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES FOR SKILLED READERS

This research pertains to how reading strategies help college or adult students to better comprehend texts. It means that instead of having students simply read the text with no purpose, these strategies are meant to increase the students' capacity to critically think about their reading. Frequently, students are passive readers and simply search for only surface level meaning to take part in discussions or do well on the essay or test assigned after a reading. By asking students to think more critically using pre, during, and post reading strategies, their reading becomes more personal and efficient. As a result, students do not feel frustrated with misunderstanding a text.

Hock (2005, p. 194)) reports that six key reading comprehension strategy categories were selected based on a review of published literature on the subject (Curtis, 2002; Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991; Gersten et al., 2001; Kamil, 2003; NICHD, 2000; RAND Reading Study Group, 2002). This author puts into consideration the following reading comprehension strategies most important to adults' success on adult literacy and its main features:

4.1 Identifying the Main Idea

• Determine what the author thinks is more important in a paragraph.

• Select some information.

• Delete some information.

• Condense some information.

• Integrate some information into a paraphrase.

4.2 Summarizing

• Determine what is most important in a unit or selection.

• Select some information.

• Delete some information.

• Condense some information.

• Integrate some information into a summary.

4.3 Drawing Inferences

• Draw inferences based on the reader's prior knowledge.

• Fill in details missing from the text.

• Draw inferences from prior text knowledge.

• Elaborate on what was read.

Consider the following example of **Identifying the Main Idea** strategy:

Figure 8

Main Idea, please

Source: http://www.rainbowresource.com/products/013251i1.jpg

Note: the main idea also called the **central idea** or **main point** is the primary concept of a passage. It represents the essential point that the author is trying to convey.

Consider the following example of **Drawing Inferences** strategy with the following text:

Table 10

What a day¡

> A soaked Randy slipped inside the door and put his dripping umbrella in the corner. As he crossed the room to our table, his shoes made a squishy, squeaking sound. "What a day!" he moaned as he plopped into a chair and grabbed a menu.

The text says . . .	I know . . .	So I infer that . . .
Randy is wet. shoes squish and squeak. he has umbrella.	you use umbrellas in rain. you get soaked in rainstorms.	it's raining hard.
he comes inside. he goes to "our" table. he grabs a menu.	restaurants have menus. restaurants have tables. people share tables in restaurants.	he's in a restaurant.

Source:

http://01.edu-cdn.com/files/static/learningexpressllc/9781576856611/Making_Inferences_01.gif

Note: An **inference** is a logical guess you make based on facts in the text *plus* what you already know from life.

4.4 Generating Questions

• Generate questions about setting, character plot, and theme in narratives.

• Generate questions about expository texts based upon author-generated

   structures such as the following:

• Compare and contrast;

• Descriptive (traits, functions, properties);

• Sequence;

• Explanation of concepts or terms;

• Definitions and examples;

• Problem, solution, and effect; and

• Cause and effect.

In other words, readers can generate questions when they are curious about something, want to predict what will happen or want to make something more clear before, during, and after reading.
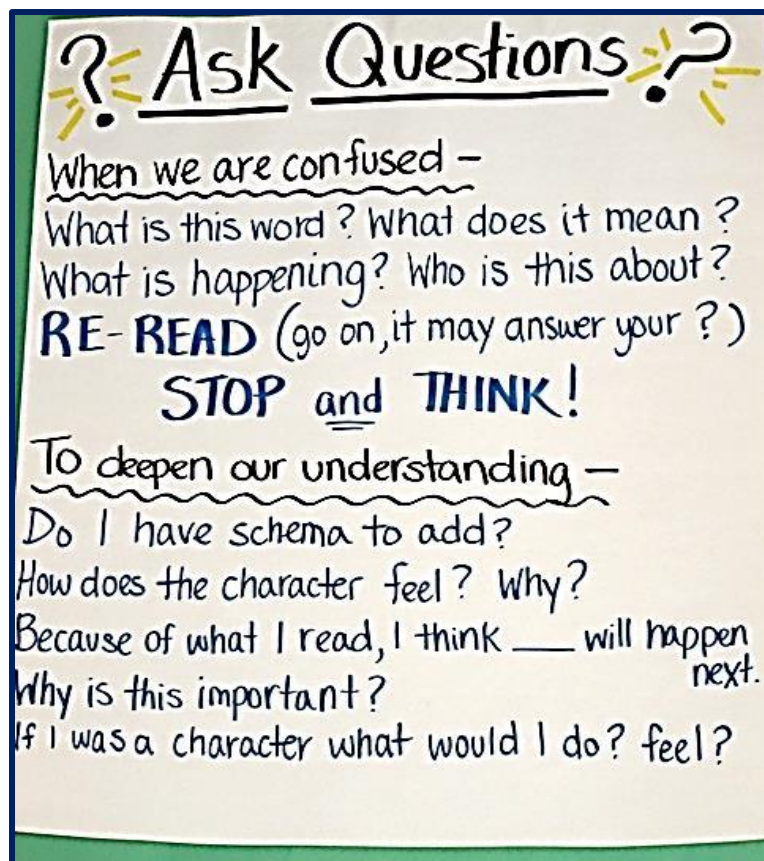

Figure 9

Ask Questions?

Source:http://www.hallco.org/literacy/images/stories/comp_strategies/questioning/asking_questions.jpg

Note: good readers are always wondering and questioning in order to be active thinkers.

4.5 Creating Visual Images

• Read small sections of the text.

• Create visual images or pictures about the text.

• Evaluate and refine the images and pictures.

4.6 Looking for Clues

• Find descriptive word clues.

• Search for clues to the elements of fiction.

• Look for clues in the pictures, headings, graphics, and author's questions.

The research team found that Summarizing and Drawing Inferences are the most important reading comprehension strategies for adult literacy outcomes.

On the other hand, Bishop (2006) wonders how educators can move students from decoding (understand the meaning of a word or phrase) to meaningful comprehension. She proposes some research-based strategies that can help teachers guide students away from sole reliance on asking for support toward more independent and strategic approaches to text. (pp. 68-69).

4.7 Ask strategic questions about context clues

• Teach students to ask themselves questions about unfamiliar words. Such questions could be, "Can I guess what this word means based on what the rest of the sentence means?", "Can I use my word analysis skills?", "Can I tell its meaning based on sounding it out or recognizing its structure?", "Are there parts of the word that I recognize?", and "Are there any pictures that add more meaning?"

• Make question asking more explicit by integrating these questions in students' daily literacy tasks or during shared reading.

• Ask students to write in their journals about their progress on strategic question asking throughout the school year.

4.8 Identify a range of textual and visual clues

- Expect students to explore texts at the start of a new reading assignment for clues on the content.
- Look at pictures and ask what meaning they might have in relation to the text.
- Direct students to read sidebars for key information that the authors emphasize.
- Model making predictions about the heading, subtopics, and italicized titles, and invite students to consider how those might influence their reading of the information. Are there other miscellaneous items, such as boxed information, italicized words, or graphs to attend to?
- Ask students to decide whether such information adds to or detracts from the meaning of the text.

4.9 Frontload text

- Model how to activate prior knowledge before reading new texts. Create a word web using a key word from the title and link associations to it.
- Ask students to write about or visualize and draw out their **predictions.**
- As a pre-reading strategy, teachers can create role-play scenarios that engage students with a similar topic, to envision predictions. For example, enactments or dramatic plays shape the experience around reading and writing. Dramatizing what students think will happen next or what the story is about helps students delve into the content area even before they read about it.
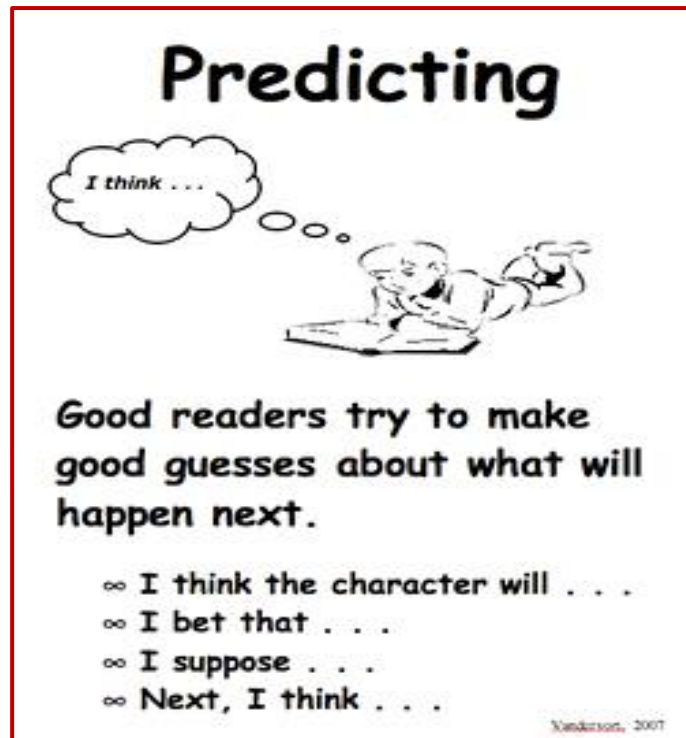
Graphic 10

Predicting

Source:

http://literacystrat.wikispaces.com/file/view/predicting.png/325127804/357x392/predicting.png

Note: Making predictions is more than just guessing what will happen next. Instead, it ensures active reading is occurring and keeps interest levels high throughout the story.

4.10 Skim texts strategically

- Teach students that skipping words can be a helpful strategy rather than an avoidance of the reading process. When students encounter an unfamiliar word or phrase, ask them to read ahead and then go back to infer its meaning. Initiate a think aloud. Is there an idea that continues in the following paragraphs? Is the word or phrase important to understanding this idea? Mark areas that appear challenging and return to them after reading further. Is there a pattern in these challenging areas?

4.11 Build on students' existing strategies

- What sets strategic readers apart from those readers who read but get little information from the text is the understanding that they must read smarter and not harder.

- Students require a range of strategies, from reading globally to seeking support and problem solving, but explicit teacher modeling of the strategies is crucial.

- Prompting students to become more aware of the choices they make when reading—through modeling, peer think-alouds, visualization, and journal keeping—helps them become more strategic readers.

- Student inventories, surveys, informal interviews, and drawings can all be powerful ways to better understand the repertoire students may possess. Understanding students' current reading strategies can help teachers point the way toward more strategic comprehension in the future.

4.12 Paraphrasing

Kletzien S. (2009, p. 73) offers a detailed explanation on paraphrasing. She considers this is a strategy that students can use to monitor and increase their comprehension. She mentions some authors (Veenman, & van Hout-Wolters, 2006; Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995) who identified paraphrasing as a strategy that good readers use. She keeps on explaining that research into teaching students has shown that paraphrasing used either alone or in conjunction with other strategies has demonstrated its benefit. Also, she mentions further authors (Bakken, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 1997; Ellis & Graves, 1990; Schumaker & Dreshler, 1992) who assure that in several intervention studies, paraphrasing has been found to help special education students increase their comprehension.

On this regard, paraphrasing is often considered the same as summarizing. However, paraphrasing, Kletzien says, is substantially different from and easier

than summarizing because in summaries, readers are expected to reduce the length of a passage reducing lists into a general statement, selecting a topic sentence or constructing one if there isn't one stated, deleting redundancy, and deleting unimportant information. Paraphrasing, on the other hand, does not require that a reader makes the distinction between important and unimportant details, find or create a topic sentence, or delete redundancy. Summarizing, therefore, is more formal than paraphrasing and requires much more practice to do it well. In other words, students may be able to paraphrase long before they acquire the sophisticated ability to summarize.

Kletzien S. (2009, p. 74) claims that paraphrasing is different from retelling. In retelling, readers are asked to use the same words of the author in explaining a passage. In paraphrasing, however, readers are encouraged to use their own words and phrasing to "translate" the material to their own way of saying it.

Moreover, paraphrasing encourages the reader to make connections with prior knowledge to access what is already known about the topic and to use words that are part of the reader's knowledge. In this process, paraphrasing can be seen as part of the monitoring aspect of metacognition because students understand how and why this strategy works.

This author considers that good readers stop when they are reading, look away from the text, and say what they have just read with their own words. If they fail to do it, they can look back and reread the text to help them. This is a good strategy to check if a reader has understood and remember the passage. The way to do it is by using think-alouds with texts that are on the student's instructional level. Both narrative and expository short passages can be used, making certain that students know why they stop at the end of each paragraph to paraphrase. Teachers can help students providing some ideas so that they can paraphrase, and then reduce gradually the number of ideas till they can take over the paraphrasing completely.

In conclusion, "paraphrasing helps students monitor their understanding and encourages them to access what they already know about a topic. It makes it clear to them that understanding is the goal of reading".(Kletzien, 2009, p.76).

Consider the following example of **Paraphrasing:**

Table 11

Paraphrasing Intermediate Level

1) There will be a few changes around in the office.

The boss announced that [there would be a few changes around] in the office.

2) They will have to take a taxi to get there in time. (need)

They [will need to take a taxi to get there] in time

3) You ought to write to your parents more often. (better)

You [had better write to your parents] more often.

4) You weren't careful, so you made so many mistakes (had)

If [you had been careful you wouldn't have made] so many mistakes.

5) You shouldn't listen to anything she says.

If [I were you I wouldn't listen to] anything she says.

6)I am almost sure there was a party at the neighbors' last night. (must)

There [must have been a party at the neighbor's] last night.

7) Do you have any plans for tomorrow?

Are [you doing anything] tomorrow?

8) He seems well-educated, however he's not very bright. (Although)

[Although he seems a well-educated person, he's not very bright]

9) He drank a cup of tea. He felt dizzy afterwards.

After [he had drunk a cup of tea, he felt dizzy]

10) He doesn't write to me as frequently as I wanted.

I wish he wrote to me more frequently

11) They broke into a warehouse last night. (was)

The warehouse was broken into last night

12) I was not paying attention to the screen so I accidentally deleted some important file on my computer. (Because)

I accidentally deleted some important file on my computer because I was not paying attention

13) I am so sorry I broke your favourite cup.

She apologized for breaking my favourite cup

14) "I don't have enough time", he complained.

He complained that he didn't have enough time

15) It was Mary who stole money.

He accused Mary of stealing the money

16) "I completely forgot!" he admitted.

He admitted that he had completely forgotten

17) The new manager seems to be a very capable woman. I met her last week (who)

The new manager who I met last week, seems to be a very capable woman.

18) They repaired my watch last week. (Had)

I had my watch repaired last week.

19) Susan has less energy than Mia. (as)

Mia doesn't have as much energy as Susan.

20) Peter has more cars than Joe. (as)

Joe doesn't have as many cars as Peter

Source: http://www.englishexercises.org/exercise.asp?id=4956

Note: When readers paraphrase they have to develop a restatement of a text or passage in another form or other words, often to clarify meaning.

4.13Think - alouds

Think-aloud is a "metacognitive technique or strategy in which a teacher verbalizes thoughts aloud while reading a selection orally, thus modeling the process of comprehension" (Harris & Hodges, 1995, p. 256).

Block C. and Israel S. (2004, p. 154) consider that think-alouds enable readers to stop periodically, reflect on the thinking they do to understand a text, and relate these literacy processes orally. Teachers use this technique as an instructional practice to help students verbalize the thoughts they use during reading, and thus bring that thinking into the open so that they can replicate it more effectively in the future. This metacognitive awareness significantly increases students' scores on comprehension tests, adds to students' self-assessment of their comprehension, and enhances students' abilities to select thinking processes to overcome comprehension challenges while they read.

Effective think-alouds explain what expert readers do before, during, and after they read a large section of text. On this regard, Block C. and Israel S. (2004, pp. 155-158) mention the following think- alouds before reading; it means, during the first pages of a book:

a) **Overview the Text**

Expert readers' first thoughts are about how to select a good book and how to activate prior knowledge about that text's topic. When choosing a book, readers need to think about how much they want to learn about a topic. Next, it is necessary to read the title and author to see if readers have enjoyed reading books by that author or about that subject. They can skim the book to see if it contains so many difficult words or pictures with formation that readers don't already know. After skimming the book, readers can look at the table of contents, index, and chapter headings. After thinking in this way for several practice sessions, readers are likely to develop the ability to overview the text every time they choose a book and select the one that brings greater enjoyment.

Next, teachers explain to students that when they begin a book they should think about the purpose and main ideas in it and pay particular attention to all details in the first few pages because most authors put the most important or main idea statement either as the first or last sentence in a paragraph. If it is the first sentence, it usually introduces the topic of that paragraph and all remaining sentences describe something about that topic. If it is the last sentence, it usually ties all details in the prior sentences. On this regard, all these pieces of information are used to decide if students want to continue reading.

b) Look for Important Information

At the beginning of a paragraph, the author of a book gives clues to help readers find the most important information. To achieve this goal, the author repeats certain words and restates some ideas more frequently than others. Furthermore, the most important idea is often followed by a sentence that gives an example to improve understanding.

c) Connect to an Author's Big Idea.

It consists on connecting ideas in a chapter or section of a book to a central theme, or the main idea in one paragraph may be connected to the next paragraph. To do it, readers have to think where the author is going, his thoughts and relate them to the big idea, moral, or theme that the author is conveying. Usually, after doing this practice with three or four pages, the reader can figure out why the author wrote that particular book.

d) Activate relevant knowledge

It means that expert readers activate relevant background experiences and eliminate naive, inaccurate, or irrelevant prior knowledge. To perform this think - aloud readers need to read carefully and think about experiences they have had that are very similar to the experiences in the book or they may pause briefly to recall background knowledge or identical experiences they have had in their lives.

e) Put Myself in the Book

Readers can "put themselves in a book" by pretending that they are the main character and sharing all the experiences described in it. They perform the think – aloud to reinforce their understanding of the reading.

Secondly, Block C. and Israel S. (2004, pp. 159-161) mention four think-alouds that reveal the thoughts that expert readers have after they have completed the first five or six pages of a book. They are:

a) Revise Prior Knowledge and Predict

It means that **e**xpert readers revise their understanding and predict as they read. To do it readers pause to describe what textual features prompted them to make a prediction; they can also ask themselves questions to make predictions such as: what clues did the author give me?, What did I already know that helped me to make a correct prediction? What did I miss that caused my prediction to be wrong?

b) Recognize an Author's Writing Style

Once students can make general predictions, the next goal is to help them infer the topic that is likely to occur in an upcoming sentence, paragraph, or chapter. To do so, expert readers analyze when and how authors introduce ideas, they also analyze the depth of an author's vocabulary, the complexity of ideas in individual sentences, the length of paragraphs, the frequency with which big ideas appear, and how an author connects sentences and paragraphs.

c) Determine Word Meanings

As its name suggests, the aim of this think aloud is to find out what a concept expresses or represents. On this regard, expert readers use several decoding strategies to infer unknown words and learn new vocabulary terms. The Determine Word Meanings think-aloud suggests that before reading, readers must identify a word that they don't know and determine whether it is a verb, adjective, adverb and so on.

Another way to determine word meanings is to establish words that contain common English phonograms (phonics), words that do not adhere to frequently occurring word patterns (sight words), words that gain meaning from syntax or semantic relationships (context clues), words that are long and do not frequently occur unless the content relates directly to a specific theme (content-specific words), unusual words (detecting accent marks and foreign derivational clues), and words when none of the above decoding processes unlock their meanings.

d) Ask Questions

It is perhaps one of the most common ways to practice language in the classroom. It is also one of the most misused. Noticeably, skilled readers ask themselves questions while they read in order to check the validity of incoming thoughts and establish the need to reread or read ahead. Whenever readers don't understand a word or a sentence, they have to stop and ask themselves questions such as: "What is it about this sentence that I don't understand? Is it a word? Is it the way the sentence connects to the prior sentence? Is the sentence unclear? Is it a bigger idea than the one that occurred before? Is the sentence so long that I need to go back and reread, or should I read ahead to get more context clues?" Once readers have asked themselves questions like these, they can find the reason for their confusion and add whatever thoughts they need to read on with understanding.

Thirdly, Block C. and Israel S. (2004, pp. 162, 163) present the following three think-alouds that expert readers do after they have read a large amount of text. These have proven to significantly increase students' retention and reflection.

a) Notice Novelty in Text

This think-aloud demonstrates how readers can use the novelties in an individual writer's style and a genre's format to flavor a printed message. Students can read two different genres about the same subject to notice novelty. For

example, they can read a recipe for making strawberry pie and compare it to a poem about strawberry pie. By doing so, readers can comprehend subtleties of meaning; identify subtleties in word choices; contrast how the textual features in one genre communicate meaning with the textual features in a second genre.

b) Relate the Book to My Life

Skilled readers apply content from text to their lives. On this regard, this think-aloud allows to summarize main sections of a text and putting all summaries together to draw a final conclusion; how to stop and remember key points; how to fit pieces of information together; and how to apply morals, themes, and subject content to the reader´s life.

c) Anticipate Use of Knowledge

This think aloud shows that skilled readers anticipate when knowledge gained from one text can be used to comprehend a new book relating facts and happenings.

Lastly, Block C. and Israel S. (2004, p. 165) claim that think-alouds have been used in a wide variety of ways to assess students' comprehension abilities in self-contained classrooms, after-school programs, and tutorial settings. The benefits of think-alouds, they say, are numerous. Namely, they present thinking processes that significantly increase students' abilities to think like expert readers, they also assist students to use these processes independently and without teacher prompting, they enhance teachers' competencies to perform highly effective think-alouds and, through them, to build their students' comprehension, decoding, vocabulary, and fluency. It has been proven that students come to realize that they can read with greater understanding and obtain more information and pleasure from books when a teacher uses think alouds.

As a result, "fewer students struggle to comprehend texts at school and home. Students will also experience the benefits of think-alouds long after they leave the

classroom, throughout their lives every time they read to achieve professional or personal goals" (p. 167).
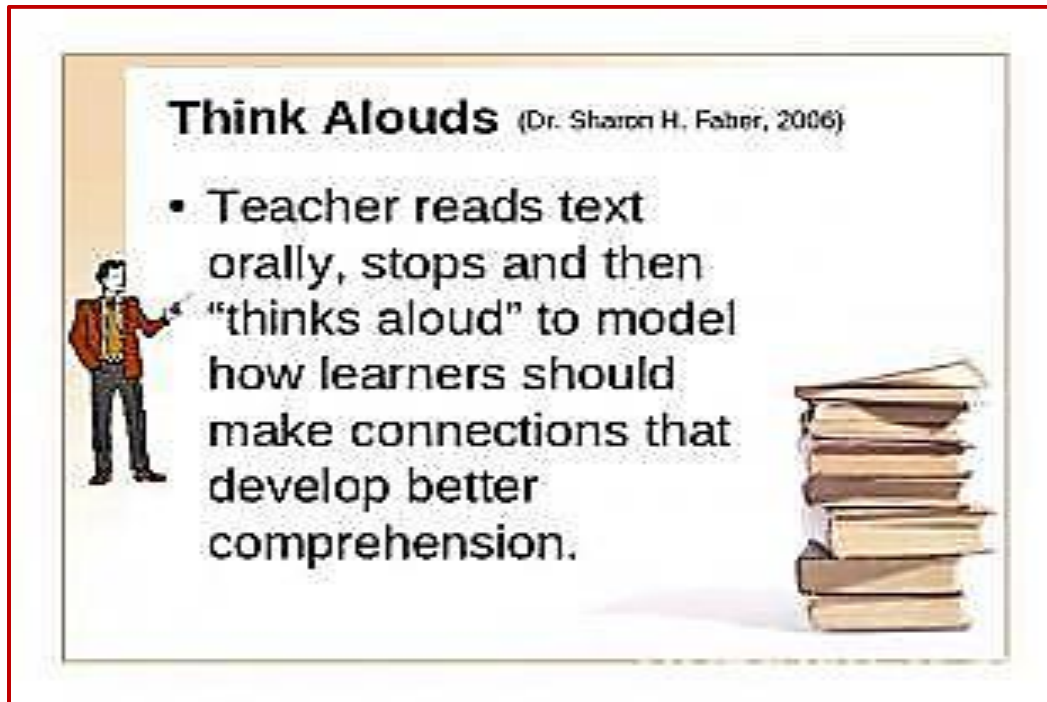
Figure 11

Think Alouds

Source: http://ppt4web.ru/images/937/24903/310/img9.jpg

Note: When readers think aloud they express their thoughts as soon as they occur. This strategy help students learn to monitor their thinking as they read and improves their comprehension. In this process, readers can re-read a sentence, read ahead to clarify, look for context clues and generate questions to make sense of what they read.

All in all, Lewis M. & Tregenza J. (2007) claim that there is a wealth of robust research evidence showing that "reading comprehension can be improved by providing direct and explicit comprehension strategy instructions so that pupils use a repertoire of active **comprehension strategies**". (p. 24). These include:

1. Providing opportunities for discussion of and about texts

2. Providing explicit vocabulary instruction

3. Building and activating world (prior) knowledge and helping students link this to what they are reading

4. Encouraging readers to monitor their comprehension and recognize that when problems are detected, pupils should know that they need to reprocess (e.g., by rereading).

Figure 12

Reading Strategies

Source: http://www.csi-literacy.com/images/home-hero.jpg

**Note:** reading comprehension strategies enable readers to construct meaning through interaction and involvement with written language.

CHAPTER V

EXPERIENCES OF READING COMPREHENSION CONDUCTED BY CARCHI STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY.

5.1 Experience performed by the SNNA-UPEC Project

The SNNA, National Admission and Leveling System is the agency in charge of administering a leveling and admission system to higher education public institutions in Ecuador, to ensure the relevance of the academic offer and the existence of a fair and transparent system, for all aspiring students, based on the application of appropriately validated standardized tests.

The Political Constitution of Ecuador in Article 350 says: "The higher education system is aimed at academic and professional training with scientific and humanistic vision, scientific and technological research, innovation, promotion, solutions to the problems of the country, in relation to the objectives of the development scheme."

On the other hand, the Higher Education Law LOES in Article 1 states: " The institutions of the Ecuadorian National System of Higher Education mission is the search for truth , the development of universal and ancestral Ecuadorian cultures, science and technology, through teaching, research and links with the community." In this context, LOES Regulations, Article 17, of the programs and linking courses with society, says: " The Academic Regulation Regime will regulate all matters related to programs and courses in connection with society as well as continuing education courses, taking into account the characteristics of the institution of higher education, their careers and programs and the needs of national, regional and local development."

With this legal basis, the UPEC launched a linking program with society in the academic period March 2013 - August 2013, under the responsibility of Dr. José Antonio Rojas Pijal - SNNA – UPEC General Coordinator. This program aimed to

first determine the levels of verbal reasoning, numerical reasoning and abstract reasoning and then plan training courses in these areas. In the field that is in our interest, it should be noted that verbal reasoning is the ability to reason with verbal contents establishing principles of classification, arrangement, relationship and meaning through the use of synonyms, antonyms, analogies, incomplete sentences and comprehensive reading.

In this process approximately 1200 third year-high school students participated, before admission to higher institutes, universities or polytechnics. These are the secondary schools that were evaluated: Bolivar Technological Institute, Vicente Fierro Technological Institute, Consejo Provincial High School, National Huaca High School, Santa Marta De Cuba High School, National El Angel High School, José Julián Andrade High School, Mario Oña Perdomo High School, and Cesar Antonio Mosquera High School. The results obtained were as follows:

TABLE OF RESULTS (OVER 10 POINTS)

GENERAL PERFORMANCE	5,6
VERBAL REASONING	4,8
ABSTRACT REASONING	5,7
NUMERICAL REASONING	6,4

Chart 12

Topic: General Average
Application Test - Bachelor Third
Province of of Carchi
April - 2013

5,6	4,8	5,7	6,4
GENERAL	RAZONAMIENTO VERBAL	RAZONAMIENTO ABSTRACTO	RAZONAMIENTO NUMÉRICO
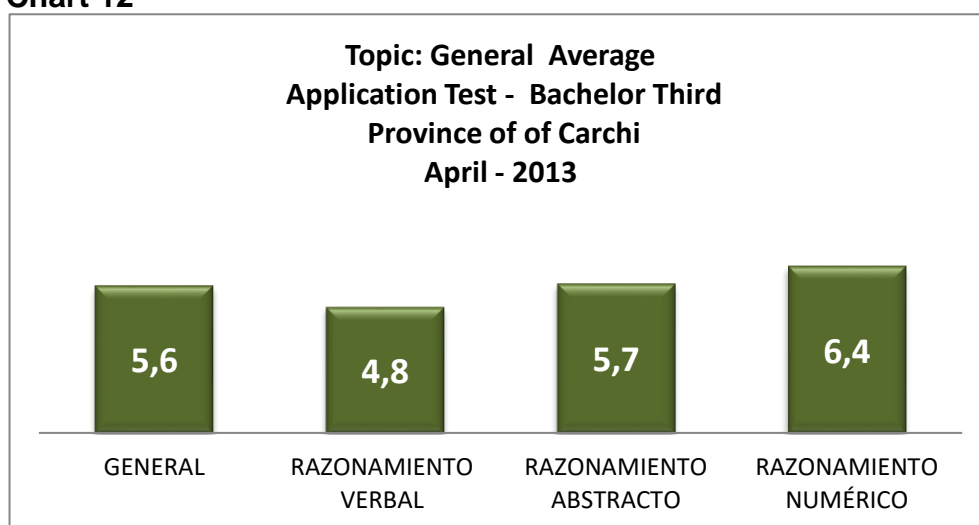
Source: UPEC – Institucional Society Linking Project– SNNA.

Note: Verbal reasoning tests, which included reading comprehension items, show a score of 4.8 out of ten points. It is determined that secondary school students who aspire to enter higher education institutions have an unsatisfactory verbal reasoning level.

5.2 Experience Performed with Students of the UPEC Faculties

A second experience was undertaken with the existing students at the Carchi State Polytechnic University distributed in the following colleges:

Table 13
Strata of sample

COLLEGE	MEN		WOMEN		TOTAL	
	POPULATION	SAMPLE	POPULATION	SAMPLE	POPULATION	SAMPLE
Business Administration and Marketing	94	40	61	26	155	**66**
Integral Agricultural Development	44	19	22	9	66	**28**
International Trade	97	41	39	16	136	**57**
Tourism and Ecotourism	32	14	20	8	52	**22**
Nursing	18	8	120	51	138	**58**
TOTAL GENERAL	285	120	262	111	547	**231**

Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora - estudiantes de la UPEC
Note: the sample of student population was subjected to a verbal ability test. The findings of the students who took this verbal aptitude test at the different colleges in the Carchi State Polytechnic University, demonstrate the reading level they possess, it is evaluated between "A little Satisfactory" and "Unsatisfactory", as evidenced by the following graphics:

Table 14

Business Administration and Marketing College Results

LEVEL	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Between 9 y 10	VERY SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 7 y 8	SATISFACTORY	2	3,03
Between 5 y 6	A LITTLE SATISFACTORY	38	57,58
Between 3 y 4	UNSATISFACTORY	26	39,39
Between 0 y 2	DISSATISFACTORY	0	0,00
TOTAL		66	100,00

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Table 15

Integral Agricultural College Results

LEVEL	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Between 9 y 10	VERY SATISFACTORY	0	0,00%
Between 7 y 8	SATISFACTORY	1	3,57%
Between 5 y 6	A LITTLE SATISFACTORY	13	46,43%
Between 3 y 4	UNSATISFACTORY	14	50,00%
Between 0 y 2	DISSATISFACTORY	0	0,00%
TOTAL		28	100,00

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Table 16

International Trade College Results

LEVEL	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Between 9 y 10	VERY SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 7 y 8	SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 5 y 6	A LITTLE SATISFACTORY	35	61,40
Between 3 y 4	UNSATISFACTORY	22	38,60
Between 0 y 2	DISSATISFACTORY	0	0,00
TOTAL		28	57

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Table 17
Tourism and Ecotourism College Results

LEVEL	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Between 9 y 10	VERY SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 7 y 8	SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 5 y 6	A LITTLE SATISFACTORY	16	72,73
Between 3 y 4	UNSATISFACTORY	6	27,27
Between 0 y 2	DISSATISFACTORY	0	0,00
TOTAL		22	100,00

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Table 18
Nursing College Results

| LEVEL	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Between 9 y 10	VERY SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 7 y 8	SATISFACTORY	1	1,72
Between 5 y 6	A LITTLE SATISFACTORY	30	51,72
Between 3 y 4	UNSATISFACTORY	27	46,55
Between 0 y 2	DISSATISFACTORY	0	0,00
TOTAL		58	100,00

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Table 19
Total Results - UPEC Students

LEVEL	INDICATOR	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Between 9 y 10	VERY SATISFACTORY	0	0,00
Between 7 y 8	SATISFACTORY	4	1,73
Between 5 y 6	A LITTLE SATISFACTORY	132	57,14
Between 3 y 4	UNSATISFACTORY	95	41,13
Between 0 y 2	DISSATISFACTORY	0	0,00
TOTAL		231	100,00

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Chart 20
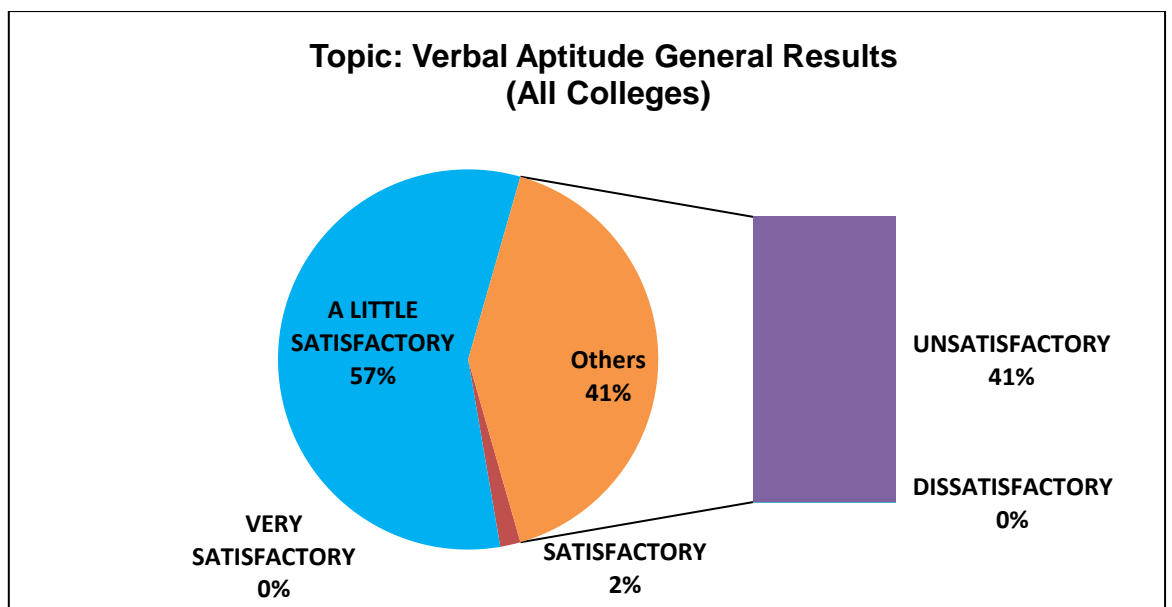
**Topic: Verbal Aptitude General Results
(All Colleges)**

A LITTLE
SATISFACTORY
57%

Others
41%

UNSATISFACTORY
41%

VERY
SATISFACTORY
0%

SATISFACTORY
2%

DISSATISFACTORY
0%

Note. Source: Análisis y soporte didáctico de la competencia lectora en los estudiantes de la UPEC

Analysis and interpretation: The graph shows that the A Little Satisfactory level corresponds to 57% of diagnosed students and is the predominant, followed by an Unsatisfactory level 41% and barely 2% corresponds to a Satisfactory level.

These results show the urgent need of helping students develop reading comprehension from the very early stages of learning to read to becoming fluent readers. Moreover, understanding what they read is at the heart of the reading process and impacts upon a reader's motivation and engagement.

The major strategies of improving reading comprehension among college students presented in this research seek to provide an alternative solution to this problem by offering a set of strategies for improving reading comprehension among college students as well as boosting their motivation towards critical reading.

5.3 Experience Performed with UPEC-English Center Students

College students are not necessarily good readers. Although they are reading advanced academic material, that does not mean they always understand the information. This fact is confronted by UPEC English Center. Therefore, the application of reading comprehension strategies will directly benefit its students.

It is noteworthy that this research will help to achieve the objective of the Higher Education Organic Law which in Article 124 - Training in values and rights – states: "It is responsibility of Higher Education System Institutions to provide their graduate students from any of the courses or programs, actual knowledge of their duties and rights as well as on the socio-economic, cultural and ecological reality of the country, mastering a foreign language and effective management of computer tools".

With this background, during semester September 2013 – February 2014 English Center students were trained to be familiar with reading strategies. In other words, they were taught how reading strategies worked in order to find out which ones they feel more comfortable working with, pointing out the ones which helped them to better comprehend texts on a literary level as well as increase their critical think about their reading.

After this process when students received modeling of reading comprehension strategies as well as an explanation of when and how to use reading strategies, the results of their preference were the following, showing that 5 represents the highest level of preference and 1 is the lowest level of preference.

Table 21

UPEC English Center Students- Preferences in the Use of Reading Strategies

Level of preference	5	4	3	2	1	Total
Think-alouds	55%	25%	20%	-	-	100%
Paraphrasing	30%	66%	4%	-	-	100%
Annotating	15%	9%	76%	-	-	100%
Open-ended questions	-	-		85%	15%	100%

Note. Source: author

Analysis: at the beginning, students were passive readers and simply searched for only surface level meaning when participating in group activities or answering the teacher´s questions. Little by little, students began to understand the need to find deeper meaning in texts and connect the topics to their lives. This process made reading worthwhile and will hopefully give them a permanent love for reading and writing. By teaching strategies for pre, during, and after reading, students said they could gain more from their reading and did not feel discouraged with misunderstanding the text.

While getting to know reading strategies for college students and efficient readers, they benefited from **open-ended questions** to think more critically and understand texts at a deeper level. They considered they were prompted by the questions included on the texts and developed good analysis of plot and character. Questions helped them to identify what was important and remember the reading. This led to have more confidence in class discussions.

Annotating turned to be an effective technique because it allowed students to paraphrase the information, identifying the main idea, secondary ideas or adding the students´ questions or reactions. Furthermore, readers were more likely to interact with the text because they engaged the content. Definitely, the most dominant strategies both used and taught for during and after reading to increase

student self-efficacy in reading was the use of **think-alouds and paraphrasing** because they activated background knowledge and then focused students' attention to the reading material allowing them to voice their thoughts about the text and not simply listen to a teacher.

Moreover, paraphrasing and think alouds are strategies that for during and after reading helped students to understand the text more deeply and to make more meaningful connections with it. Almost all students said that these two kinds of reading strategies were the ones they liked the most.

CONCLUSIONS

- Reading strategies are cognitive actions used by readers to enhance their reading comprehension and accomplishing the interpreting task. If readers lack of sufficient language knowledge, they take reading strategies to get a better understanding of textual information.

- Teacher´s prompts before reading are necessary to engage students, stimulate their curiosity, emotions and activate previous experiences.

- Pre, during, and post reading strategies are essential to student understanding of a text. Keep in mind that reading is a complex interaction between the text, the reader and the purposes for reading.

- Pre-reading strategies prepare students for learning by activating their prior knowledge about the topic featured in the text. During-reading strategies teach comprehension by making connections, generating questions, reflecting on the information in the text and determining importance by guiding the reader to use proficient reader strategies. After reading strategies clarify their understanding of the text connecting the old and new knowledge and help students frame it in some way to their lives.

- Reading comprehension is a process in which there is interaction among word identification, prior knowledge, comprehension strategies, and engagement.

- College student graduates are not necessarily good readers. Even though they are reading advanced academic material, it does not mean that they always comprehend the information.

- Frequently, students are passive readers and simply search for only surface level meaning to take part in discussions or do well on the essay or test assigned after a reading. By asking students to think more critically using pre, during, and post reading strategies, their reading becomes more personal and efficient. As a result, students do not feel frustrated with misunderstanding a text.

- The experiences of reading comprehension conducted by Carchi State Polytechnic University show that in verbal reasoning tests, which included reading comprehension items, secondary school students who aspired to enter higher education institutions had an unsatisfactory verbal reasoning level. Moreover, students who are currently part of the UPEC faculties also have an unsatisfactory level of reading comprehension.

- Think-alouds and paraphrasing are the strategies that UPEC English Center students preferred to carry out reading practices and improve their comprehension.

- Despite students got to know reading strategies, the development of reading comprehension depends not only on individual use of strategies but the implementation of a set of them at the same time.

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