

Reading Comprehension Strategies: A Case Study in a Bilingual High School

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Comprehension is the main purpose of reading and involves three factors: the reader, the text, and the context in which the text is read. However, not everybody reaches comprehension. Perhaps there is a lack of interest from the reader, the text is not appropriate or simply the reader does not use the strategies needed to obtain meaning. Being aware of reading comprehension strategies will make students become effective readers thanks to cognitive, metacognitive and socio-affective processes. This paper describes the methodology applied to identify the reading strategies used by bilingual students in high school and the interpretation of data obtained in a first approach. Also, it shows the future work needed to validate the data from the questionnaires applied.

Key words: Metacognition, cognition, socio-affective factors, reading comprehension

El principal propósito de la lectura es la comprensión, la cual incluye tres factores: el lector, el texto y el contexto en que se lee el texto. Sin embargo, no toda persona llega a hacer esta comprensión. Quizá exista una falta de interés por parte del lector, el texto no es adecuado o simplemente el lector no usa las estrategias necesarias para llegar al significado. El ser consciente de las estrategias de comprensión de lectura hará que los estudiantes sean lectores más eficaces gracias a procesos cognitivos, meta-cognitivos y socio-afectivos. Este trabajo describe la metodología que se usó para identificar las estrategias de lectura utilizadas por estudiantes bilingües en la secundaria; y la interpretación de los datos obtenidos en la primera aproximación. Además, muestra el trabajo que se necesitará para dar validez a los datos obtenidos a partir de los cuestionarios que se usaron.

Palabras clave: metacognición, cognición, socioafectividad, comprensión lectora

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Introduction

Reading comprehension strategies have been a widely studied theme for years. Although there have been quite a number of investigations concerned with this subject, what differentiates one from another is its approach. It is true that the context in which the study is developed makes it unique in time, place and the participants' individual differences. The purpose of this paper is to describe an initial approach to researching reading comprehension strategies used by high school students. The present paper is addressed to bilingual high school students, whose linguistic competence may be considered as advanced intermediate, basing this fact on their Test of English as a Foreign language (TOEFL) score and the stages of learning a second language.

What seems to be interesting is the observable fact that, mainly students with an acceptable level of English, transfer most of their first language reading strategies to their second language reading process because first language provides students with a set of skills and metalinguistic knowledge that can be easily transferred when learning another language. In addition, in this study, it cannot be omitted that there exist two crucial reading models that allow students to construct meaning from the texts. They are the bottom-up approach and the top down approach (Nuttall, 1996).

A clear example of how to use both approaches is shown with non native speakers. When we read a text in English or any other language, we will probably use the bottom-up approach first because it will be needed to decode words, expressions, punctuation, or any other structure in order to succeed in comprehension. However, comprehension and interpretation will be much more effective if we have prior knowledge about the subject; that is, when we go beyond the text structure and connect both the world knowledge with the linguistic knowledge. This is called the top-down approach. Therefore, with this explanation, it is inferred that an interactive approach is needed in the reading process which will make comprehension effective if the reader applies it when interacting with a second or foreign language text.

The previously described reading theories take place when students use strategies in reading. They are known as bottom-up strategies and top down-strategies. First of all, before going into reading comprehension strategies, it is important to define learning strategies. According to Castello (as cited in Monereo, 2002), the fact of having learning strategies involves making decisions intentionally and voluntarily about how to behave in order to achieve

a specific learning objective. Reading strategies let students decide on how to read, taking into account their own objectives plus the characteristics of the text (p. 191).

For Solé (2005), reading comprehension strategies are procedures involving goals, planning actions to achieve them, how to evaluate them and a possible change. For her, it is necessary to teach strategies if we want to achieve reading comprehension. Therefore, strategies are taught or not taught, learned or not learned. Moreover, reading strategies are considered high order procedures where cognition and metacognition processes play an important role. That is, a strategic mind has a capacity to represent and analyze problems and a flexibility to find solutions (pp. 59-60).

As cognition and metacognition are part of an effective comprehension in reading, so is the socioaffective aspect. Some studies have shown that socioaffective strategies are strongly required in the second language reading process because students share ideas that enrich one's knowledge and this will result in motivation, attitude and anxiety reduction. Interaction before, while or after reading may occur among the students or between students and teacher. Evidently, socioaffective strategies are regarded as one of the pillars in reading comprehension effectiveness.

As it has been stated through this article, comprehension is the main purpose of reading and involves three factors: the reader, the text, and the context in which the text is read, but unfortunately not everybody reaches comprehension. Perhaps there is a lack of interest from the reader, the text is not appropriate or simply the reader does not use the strategies needed to obtain meaning. Comprehension strategies in reading include preparing, organizing, elaborating, and monitoring.

Describing Gunning's (2000) taxonomy briefly, it can be highlighted that in preparational strategies, the students survey the text and anticipate what it will be about; in organizational strategies, the readers connect the main idea with the supporting details; elaboration strategies integrate the information that is being read with information read previously. Finally, the crucial monitor strategies refer to how the reader regulates his comprehension process.

Besides the use of strategies, comprehension encompasses the text itself and the context. It can be said that a text is part of the interactive communication. Certainly, texts need readers to give meaning. As it was previously discussed, meaning can be constructed through the use of both the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The question at this point is “How can I identify whether a text is communicative or not?” “What does ‘being communicative’ refer to?”.

Texts must accomplish seven characteristics to be seen as communicative ones. According to De Beaugrande & Dressler (1981), communicative texts show cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality.

- *Cohesion* refers to the relationship between text and syntax, that is, how the elements of the text are connected in a progressive sequence.
- *Coherence* refers to the meaning of the text which can be reached by applying cognitive processes.
- *Intentionality* has to do with the attitude and purpose of the writer.
- *Acceptability* concerns the preparation of the reader to evaluate the relevance of a given text.
- *Informativity* is related to quantity and quality of new or expected information.
- *Situationality* refers to the situation in which the text is produced and plays an important role in the production and reception of the message.
- *Intertextuality* refers to the fact that the reader needs to know about other text genres such as narrative texts, argumentative texts, descriptive texts, etc.

These principles have a big influence in the field of reading in a second language because interaction occurs between the writer, who produces, and the reader receiving and constructing meaning. It also should be emphasized that the reading process is linked to everyday situations, and meaning depends on the social context too. Finally, it is important to bear in mind how suitable the text is in order to exploit it effectively, supplement it if necessary, and perhaps argue the case for its replacement.

Before describing the methodology applied in the pilot study, the importance of the think-aloud model must be stated. The idea of using this instrument came out because cognitive and metacognitive processes are hard to be observed and measured. Moreover, participants usually tend to answer the questionnaires with the information expected from the investigator, that is, they often write down what the investigator is looking for. This tool is intended to

identify the main ideas and supporting ideas while one reads the text. Teachers have the goal of engaging students in reading; for this reason, they need to provide students with strategies to monitor their own comprehension. Every resource used is of great importance in this model such as underlining, notes, stating conclusions, asking questions that arise, guessing meanings with unknown words, making connections between paragraph and paragraph and other strategies.

The think-aloud technique is considered as a technique used mainly by the teacher, first to help students understand how they make meaning when they read, and then students try to follow that model. This instrument will be taken in this study since it might be a source of data to demonstrate that readers think about what they read while they read. It is part of the teacher's responsibilities to model how to use the think-aloud technique when reading different types of texts. Using this protocol, the teacher has a glimpse into students' cognitive and metacognitive processes. For example, students usually make comments about what they are reading, they make inferences, they laugh or they guess meanings by context. Once the teachers understand the comprehension strategies that students use, they can find a way to support those strategies or any other effective strategies. This protocol is strongly recommended by Wilhem (2001) who labels it as a strategy to improve comprehension. In his words, "think-alouds can help because they require the reader to slow down and to reflect on how they are understanding and interpreting text" (p. 96). This instrument has not been applied yet, but it will be in the central study.

Methodology

"I believe that the theme of reading comprehension is fundamental for one who works in a classroom every day. Through reading strategies students gain a better understanding of the texts in English they interact with, and this is possible thanks to the mental processes developed by each individual". Jessica Rodríguez

The pilot study took place at the Bilingual Education Research Center (CIDEB) from the Universidad Autonoma de Nuevo Leon which houses a bilingual High School Program. The sample was composed of ten students in the third semester of the bilingual system during the semester August-December 2007. To contextualize, it is important to mention that 8 out of 10 participants had a minimum TOEFL total score of 450 points. One of them had a score of 353 because the score in the listening section was not registered, and the other participant's score

whose reading section was not registered either, got 323. We can say that this sample might be placed in an upper-intermediate level or in the intermediate fluency stage in accordance with the characteristics of the process of learning a foreign language. Students in the intermediate fluency stage have an active vocabulary of 6000 words, use complex sentences in both speaking and writing skills, share opinions and express ideas, ask questions to clarify information and study lesson content in English (Krashen & Terrel, 1983). Previous studies have presumed the fact that the strategies used to read in Spanish can easily be transferred to the reading of texts in English, but if the student is not capable of doing so, then we are facing either a learner without strategies in reading in his mother tongue or with no idea of how to transfer those first language reading strategies.

The text read for this study was a four-page essay, and the aim was to find out the most frequently used strategies. A before, during and after reading model was followed in order to classify the strategies into preparational strategies, organizational strategies, elaboration strategies, and monitor strategies (Gunning, 2000).

The study was structured in three sessions in which the instruments were applied as follows:

First Session

The first questionnaire was intended to find out data about the cognitive strategies most frequently used at the time of interacting with a text in English (See Appendix 1).

Second Session

The second and third questionnaires (See Appendixes 2 and 3) were designed to identify personal metacognitive strategies used before and after reading a text in English. In addition to these questionnaires, the participants had to read the essay and answer some comprehension activities in order to identify their level of understanding toward the reading. Before giving the text, the participants were told that the topic of the four-page essay would be about the relationship between Canada and the United States.

This session was filmed in order to identify the strategies that participants used while reading, that is, observable actions such as leafing through the reading, taking a dictionary, clarifying doubts with someone or underlining words. All participants were informed of the recording.

Third Session

Participants answered the fourth questionnaire to identify the socioaffective strategies present when interacting with a text in English (See Appendix 4). At the end, a focus group meeting was conducted.

The focus group was led by the researcher who was following a protocol already established. The purpose of this meeting was to find information that could not be gathered with the previous questionnaires and observe the students' attitudes and reactions to the questions. In addition, the focus group was aimed at giving participants the opportunity to express their experience with the reading process. The questions were answered by interacting with the group. Usually, the answer was given in chorus as soon as the investigator finished the question. Then, one, two or three participants took the floor.

One of the difficult tasks faced when analyzing the data of the focus group was that some participants spoke at once. Also, others spoke very low which made the transcription a long and complicated process at times. It was impossible to take notes for everything and some comments were of little significance. One of the disadvantages was that the participants were hungry and they had just taken a very time-consuming examination of etymology. Finally, it is important to highlight the fact that the environment was a key factor. There was noise outside and the participants got distracted whenever someone arrived at the place where the focus group was carried out. All of these factors made the conduction of the session difficult and later on the transcription of the conversations was challenging as well.

The focus group questions were formulated in advance. They were related to the cognitive and metacognitive areas as well as the reading comprehension process since these areas are difficult to observe even in a film. The participants were told about the recording before starting the discussion in order to respect their right to stay or leave the session. This session was also filmed as a possibility to observe and help in further analysis of the factors involved in the reading process. In the recording, one can observe a lot more than what the

students say: behavior, attitude, facial expressions and body language could be interpreted. The focus group objective was to gather information that could validate the data collected in the questionnaires. Furthermore, the main goal was to gather interesting data about the experience with the text given to read.

Results and Interpretation Data

The statements below reflect the highest percentages found when it comes to the strategies that participants *always* use when they have to read a text in English.

- Verify whether their predictions were right. 50%
- Clarify their possible doubts in the text by rereading what was not clear enough. 50%
- Stop at times and reflect. 50%
- Evaluate whether the plot or moral is interesting. 50%
- Connect what is known with the theme of the text. 60%
- Start connecting mentally the events in the short story in order to form a sequence of the plot without writing summaries, graphic organizers or consulting a dictionary. 60%
- Analyze the characters' actions to understand the plot. 70%
- Use imagination and associate images with the information that is being read. 70%

This evidence confirms that students do apply the 'elaboration' strategies which belong to the cognitive and metacognitive areas. Verifying predictions, rereading what was not understood, reflecting and connecting prior knowledge are metacognition strategies where the students evaluate their comprehension. In addition, some cognitive strategies found in these studies are connecting the events in a short story while students read through the analysis of the characters and the use of imagination during the process. It is interesting to see how the reflection strategy could fit in the three areas (cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective) since the students stop after certain lines to think how important or interesting the plot is or how useful the reading will be in their personal future lives.

In contrast, according to the students' answers to the questionnaires and the analysis of the focus group recording, the cognitive strategies with the highest percentage that were reported as *never* used by students were the following.

- To translate word by word. 50%
- To write a summary about the short story as they read along and understand the plot of that story. 50%
- To use different markers (colors) to highlight important details giving a different meaning to each color. 60%

This seems to indicate that students do the reading without stopping. They do not pause to translate words; they do not write summaries about the text; they do not underline using different colors. In other words, they do not use some ‘organization’ strategies (Gunning, 2000) which relate to the cognitive area.

At the end of the first questionnaire, the students mentioned some strategies that were not included in any of the categories previously mentioned. The results are shown as follows.

- I read bit by bit so the reading does not seem to be that long (organization strategy).
- I read background information about the author to know about what was happening at the time he wrote the story (preparational strategy).
- I investigate what I read to get more information about the facts that may be explicit (elaboration strategy).

In order to analyze the metacognitive strategies before reading a text in English, it was necessary to establish a coding method. In this way, the information could be classified into categories. In this section, the students answered open questions generating longer answers. The results were the following.

- Students read the synopsis and the title of the story (preparational strategy).
- In the essay given to read, students said that the goal was to learn about the topic (preparational strategy).
- When students anticipated what the text would be about, they said that it would probably be about the view Canada and the United States have of each other (preparational strategy).

It is true that the students were aware of their lack of prior knowledge about the topic because they knew very little about the relationship between these two countries. Before reading the essay, they stated that the possible obstacles would be the unknown words. The goal of the reading exercise was to understand the relationship between Americans and Canadians. The students claimed that they would read the text at their own pace (preparational strategy). They argued that if they found it difficult, they would reread whatever they had not understood (metacognition).

The previous results show that students prepare themselves before reading a text. It can be said that they do use the preparational strategies; although in this case, the prior knowledge was not of great help to make a wider variety of predictions. These strategies are classified in the metacognitive area.

The questionnaire designed to collect information about the actions students did after reading the essay were the following.

- The students identified the main idea of the text due to the fact that it was developed through the reading. *Organization strategy*
- Whenever students met an unknown word, they found the way to guess the meaning by the context. *Elaboration strategy*.
- Students affirmed that there were no doubts about the text. *Metacognitive strategy since they know that the goal of comprehending has been met, that is, they overcame obstacles that could have hampered comprehension.*
- They also wrote that one of the strategies to understand the passages that were not clear was to go back and read the passages again. They also suggested doing some research about the topic. *Metacognitive strategy*.
- The little prior knowledge about the theme was reinforced and expanded. *Metacognitive strategy*.
- What made comprehension easy to reach was the attention paid, the interest in the theme, and reading at their own pace. *Preparational, metacognitive, and socioaffective strategy*.

- The students were asked to recall what they had done before reading the Canadians and Americans essay. They stated that it was the beginning synopsis that they read first. *Preparational strategy.*

The information gathered shows that the metacognitive strategies are present when the students finish reading a text. The most interesting finding is that after the students have read, they are aware of the organization and elaboration strategies applied. Organization strategies (identifying the main idea) and elaboration strategies (guessing meaning by context) are part of both areas, cognitive and metacognitive ones.

The data gathered through the questions made in the focus group showed the following about students and how they interact with the texts they are reading:

- When the students make predictions, they start to imagine things they know about the topic already.
- Students use the context to guess the unknown vocabulary. A few students use the dictionary.
- They look at key words to understand the text.
- This particular reading (the essay) was tedious even when they said the theme was interesting.
- The only thing students did to identify the main idea in this essay was reading.
- Students read the essay at their own pace.
- Students made sure to understand the essay thanks to the comprehension activities given after the reading and the coherence between paragraphs.

The focus group confirmed that the strategies proposed by Oxford (1990), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) are present in the participant's reading process. All the strategies found have been classified in Gunning's model, especially in the cognitive and metacognitive area.

We have got to the point of analyzing the results related to the socioaffective aspect. In these findings, it must be pointed out that there were no percentages higher than 40%. For this reason, contrary to cognitive results previously presented, all the percentages related to the frequency of socioaffective strategies will be given in the following lines.

The socioaffective strategies *always* used by the participants when they read a text in English are the following ones:

- I ask the teacher to clarify my doubts about the information that I didn't understand in the reading. 30%
- I clarify my doubts with a classmate. 40%
- I clarify my doubts with more than one classmate. 30%
- I clarify my doubts with the best student. 40%
- I compare my answers in the comprehension activity with my classmate(s). 30%
- I discuss the reading with my classmate. 30%
- I help my classmates with doubts they have in the reading. 30%

The following results refer to feelings experienced not strategies.

- I feel motivated and with a positive attitude to start reading. 30%
- I feel anxiety when I don't comprehend the reading. 10%
- I feel discouraged to read. 40%

It can be learned from these findings that less than 40% of the students always interact with their classmates or the teacher. Based on Gunning's ideas (2000), it is claimed that interaction results in wider knowledge about the text because students learn from each others' perspectives and interpretation (p. 238). However, there is an interesting finding that shows that a low percentage of students do not interact that much to clarify doubts and reach a construction of meaning and interpretation. In this case, the reading process is seen as an individual task since reflection and metacognition are considered more personalized strategies. It is important to note that anxiety always appears in 10% of the students. It was necessary to revise the data obtained in the choices of "often" and "seldom" in order to know where the highest percentage was found. The result was that anxiety and discouragement are present very often since the percentage of "often" is higher than "seldom" in both categories (anxiety and discouragement). It can be concluded that interaction needs to be promoted in reading because it could be a solution to reduce brooding and increase motivation.

After identifying the frequency of the socioaffective strategies in the reading process, participants answered some open questions related to the same subject. Participants claimed that the strategy of interaction was of great help in order to better comprehend the text and clarify doubts about it. It is very interesting to see how students' ideas about teamwork differed a lot. On the one hand, 50% regarded teamwork as a way of enriching one's perspective with the others' points of view, but 30 % entirely agreed with the fact that one can comprehend the text much better without the others' ideas. Finally, 20% responded that teamwork could lead to a disruptive behavior that would hamper comprehension. In summary, students usually like working in teams to discuss the reading, but in the questionnaires they reported that they barely questioned doubts.

Another aspect mentioned was motivation. Participants highlighted that they felt motivated when their doubts were explained because in this way they felt more confident in the exam. However, when it comes to anxiety, they usually use their own strategies such as relaxing, reading part by part, asking someone, reading slowly, rereading, searching a synopsis, finding the interesting side of the reading, and leafing through the text to know how many pages are left. The socioaffective findings in this pilot study show that students have not quite developed interaction strategies. Even though they stated that reading in teams resulted in comprehension (data obtained in the focus group), the percentages show that less than 40% *always* interact with the others in the reading process.

Conclusions

After having analyzed the results, we have arrived at the conclusion that the reader is the one who finally selects the strategies to be used. The key to succeed in reading comprehension is to know when and how to apply the cognitive, metacognitive and socioaffective strategies. In other words, what really matters, actually, is the process developed rather than the result. Nevertheless, it is certain that the strategies are meant to reach comprehension and the awareness of their effectiveness will make the reader succeed in the result of the process.

The present paper in the area of reading comprehension in a foreign language has discussed several issues regarding the reading comprehension process. The results presented here were the results of a pilot study structured in three stages. The first part of the report focused on the cognitive strategies most frequently used by students before, during and after the

reading of a text in English. It was interesting to identify which strategies are more common to them and which still seem to be alien. Another preliminary finding of this research was the realization that metacognition plays an important role in the students' awareness of comprehension since they choose the strategies they feel more comfortable with and use them when needed. The third part of this initial approach showed that socioaffective strategies are also involved in the field of reading in a second language. These strategies play a very important role through interaction and emotions when students share ideas that enrich one's knowledge and this will result in motivation, attitude and anxiety reduction. A final finding was that in fact, as theory puts it, comprehension strategies must be learned and can be developed through practice.

Future work

This research, however, does not end here. A central study will be conducted with a larger sample using authentic texts to read and applying the think-aloud protocol.

First of all, it should be stated that an authentic text refers to a reading that does not show any kind of help for the reader, that is, no notes or tips of strategies to be used. Consequently, the text will be taken from the Internet, maybe with some modifications to include all the information wanted.

It was thought to apply an additional instrument called think-aloud protocol which is intended to identify the main ideas and supporting ideas as well while one reads the text. Every resource used is of great importance in this model such as underlining, notes, stating conclusions, questions that occur, problems with unknown words or making connections between paragraph and paragraph. Thinking aloud may also be useful to stimulate participants' comments about motivation, doubts or guessing. Participants will be asked to verbalize their thoughts and ideas as they read. The think aloud is considered as a technique used mainly by the teacher to help students understand how they make meaning when they read. This instrument will be taken in the central study since it might be a source of data to demonstrate that readers think about what they read while they read. In this way, the results obtained through the questionnaires will be more valid. Furthermore, it is part of the teacher's responsibilities to model how to use the think-aloud technique when reading different types of texts. According to Wilhelm (2001), with this protocol, the teacher has a glimpse into students' cognitive and

metacognitive processes, and once he or she understands the comprehension strategies students use, he or she can find a way to support those strategies or more effective ones.

In order to use the think-aloud protocol, five students will be selected. It is important to note that they will share the same characteristics as the participants in the previous studies (pilot and central). There will be two sessions for each group of participants because some of them attend classes in the morning shift while the others in the afternoon shift. The first session will be intended to orient the students to the situation and to introduce them to the study. The investigator will inform students what the think-aloud protocol is about by means of a power point presentation which will also display the different kinds of prompts to be used while thinking aloud. In the same session, the investigator will model how to read a text and think aloud at the same time. After that, the participants will practice with different texts, otherwise the rest of the participants might only repeat the information being heard. It is quite important to give feedback when necessary and encourage participants not to remain silent.

Then the investigator will set a different date to meet each of the students individually and carry out the real think-aloud protocol. The participants will know that this technique will be filmed. After finishing the five think-aloud protocols, the data will be analyzed and the results will be presented in great detail with the results of the central study too. We hope that in so doing, our findings relate more closely to the realities encountered in other foreign language classrooms.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire to Identify the Cognitive Strategies (Construction of the Mental Processes) and their Frequency in the Reading Comprehension of A Text in English¹

This instrument will help you find out your efficiency in the reading comprehension skill of texts in English. You are needed to answer this questionnaire since the aim of it is that you proceed to the gradual establishment of the skills required to understand a text in a foreign language (English in this study). Veracity in your answers is very important to analyze the data.

The following questionnaire has the purpose of obtaining information for an investigation of a doctoral thesis. Please, answer it objectively with the responses that identify you the most. There are no correct or incorrect answers. The data collected will be used in a confidential way.

Read every question carefully and answer according to following key:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Often
- 3 = Always

Read the statements carefully and mark your answer on the line to the right.

When I read a text in English, How often ...

1. Do I connect what I know already about the topic with the information that the text presents? _____
2. Do I elaborate hypotheses not presented in the text which could be the reason of the conflict that is approached? _____
3. Do I make predictions or anticipate what will happen in the short story? _____
4. Do I verify that my predictions have been the correct ones? _____
5. Do I focus my attention on the importance of key words (boldfaced, in italics, or underlined)? _____
6. Do I create graphic organizers (tables, schemes, graphs) to understand the events in the short story? _____
7. Do I easily recognize the main ideas? _____
8. Do I underline the main ideas? _____
9. Do I take brief notes in the margins of what I consider to be more important? _____
10. Do I start writing a summary of the short story according to what I am understanding from the plot? _____
11. Do I use imagination and associate images with the information that I am reading? _____
12. Do I ask myself about the events that are taking place in the short story? _____
13. Do I clarify my possible doubts about the text by rereading what was not clear? _____
14. Do I integrate comments or information that the teacher or other classmates make? _____
15. Do I use graphic aids such as exclamation points or any other symbol for the information that turns out to be surprising? _____

¹ This instrument was designed based on the ideas of the following authors: Díaz-Barriga (2002), Gunning (2000), Monereo (2000) and Solé (2005).

16. Do I use graphic aids such as question marks or any other symbol for the doubts that come up? _____
17. Do I use graphic aids such as asterisk or any other symbol to highlight the main ideas? _____
18. Do I use an English-English dictionary when I face unknown words? _____
19. Do I use an English-Spanish dictionary when I face unknown words? _____
20. Do I use markers of different colors to highlight important information by means of assigning a different meaning to each color? For example, a color for highlighting key words, another one for underlining the main ideas or another one for the author's comments. _____
21. Do I mentally connect the events of the short story in order to understand the plot without the need of writing summaries, creating word maps or using a dictionary? _____
22. Do I analyze the behaviors of the main characters to understand the plot? _____
23. Do I read the information in the margins given by the author? _____
24. Do I translate word by word? _____
25. Do I read aloud? _____
26. Do I stop reading to reflect about the information being learned? _____
27. Do I evaluate if the content of the text is interesting? _____
28. Mention if you use any other strategy different to the ones presented in this questionnaire. Also, write down how often you use it. _____
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I really appreciate the time spent to take part in this educational research.

Appendix 2: Questionnaire to Identify the Metacognitive Strategies (Knowledge of the Cognitive Processes) in the Reading Comprehension of a Text in English²

This instrument will help you find out your efficiency in the reading comprehension skill of texts in English. You are needed to answer this questionnaire since the aim of it is that you proceed to the gradual establishment of the skills required to understand a text in a foreign language (English in this study). Veracity in your answers is very important to analyze the data.

The following questionnaire has the purpose of obtaining information for an investigation of a doctoral thesis. Please, answer it objectively with the responses that identify you the most. There are no correct or incorrect answers. The data collected will be used in a confidential way.

Read every question carefully and answer according to following key:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Often
- 3 = Always

Read the statements carefully and mark your answer in the line of the right.

Before reading

The essay that you will read is about how the Americans regard Canadians and vice versa. The title of the essay is "Through the one-way mirror," written by Margaret Atwood.

1. What do I usually do before starting to read a text?

2. What is the purpose of reading this essay? (What I want to obtain after this reading)

3. Besides the information that has been given to me about this essay, what do I think the essay is going to be about?

4. What do I already know about this topic (the relationship between Canada and The United States)?

5. What difficulties might I have in order to comprehend this text?

6. What do I want to learn about this text?

7. Will I read fast, according to my pace, or slowly?

8. What do I do when the text is complicated to me and I do not understand it?

I really appreciate the time spent to take part in this educational research.

Now you will proceed to read the essay named "Through the one-way mirror."

² This instrument was designed based on the ideas of the following authors: Díaz-Barriga (2002), Gunning (2000), Monereo (2002) and Solé (2005).

Appendix 3: Questionnaire to Identify the Metacognitive Strategies (Knowledge of the Cognitive Processes) in the Reading Comprehension of a Text in English³

This instrument will help you find out your efficiency in the reading comprehension skill of texts in English. You are needed to answer this questionnaire since the aim of it is that you proceed to the gradual establishment of the skills required to understand a text in a foreign language (English in this study). Veracity in your answers is very important to analyze the data.

The following questionnaire has the purpose of obtaining information for an investigation of a doctoral thesis. Please, answer it objectively with the responses that identify you the most. There are no correct or incorrect answers. The data collected will be used in a confidential way.

Read every question carefully and answer according to following key:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Often
- 3 = Always

Read the statements carefully and mark your answer on the line of the right.

After reading the essay

1. Did I identify the main idea of the essay?

2. How did I identify the main idea?

3. What strategy did I use when I met unknown words?

4. Do I remember some important information for the essay?

5. If I answered “yes” in the previous question, what do I remember exactly which seems to be important?

6. Why did I read this essay?

7. Does the content presented in the essay make sense?

8. How is this essay useful to me?

9. What did I learn from the text?

10. What doubts do I have about the essay?

11. How can I solve my doubts?

12. How can I connect what I just have read with my prior knowledge?

³ This instrument was designed based on the ideas of the following authors: Díaz-Barriga (2002), Gunning (2000) and Monereo (2002).

13. What objective did I set before beginning to read the essay?

14. Did I achieve my objective?

15. What was the reason of having or not having achieved my objective?

16. If I had to read this essay again with the same objective set, how would I read it and what procedures would I use?

17. When did I face obstacles in my reading, and what kind of difficulties were they?

18. How did I overcome these difficulties?

19. Did I really know what the essay would be about so I could have decided on how to read it?

20. What strategy did I use (leafing through, focusing on details, or any another strategy) to prepare myself before reading?

Once again, I really appreciate the time spent to take part in this educational research.

Appendix 4: Questionnaire to Identify the Socio-Affective Strategies (Level of Empathy between the Student and the Teacher or Student and Student, Role of Emotions and Attitudes) and Their Frequency in the Reading Comprehension of A Text in English⁴

This instrument will help you find out your efficiency in the reading comprehension skill of texts in English. You are needed to answer this questionnaire since the aim of it is that you proceed to the gradual establishment of the skills required to understand a text in a foreign language (English in this study). Veracity in your answers is very important to analyze the data.

The following questionnaire has the purpose of obtaining information for an investigation of a doctoral thesis. Please, answer it objectively with the responses that identify you the most. There are no correct or incorrect answers. The data collected will be used in a confidential way.

Read every question carefully and answer according to following key:

- 0 = Never
- 1 = Rarely
- 2 = Often
- 3 = Always

Read the statements carefully and mark your answer on the line of the right.

When I read a text in English, How often ...

1. Do I ask the teacher about my doubts concerning what was not clear to me in the reading? _____
2. Do I ask my classmates about my doubts? _____
3. Do I ask more than one classmate about my doubts? _____
4. Do I ask the most intelligent student about my doubts? _____
5. Do I compare the answers from the reading comprehension activity with my classmates'? _____
6. Do I discuss the topic of the reading with a classmate? _____
7. Do I work in a team to better comprehend the reading? _____
8. Do I help my classmates clarify doubts about the reading? _____
9. Do I feel anxiety when I do not comprehend what the reading is about? _____
10. Do I feel motivated and with a positive attitude to read? _____
11. Do I feel discouraged to read? _____

Answer the following questions.

1. Do I think the most frequent reading strategies chosen from question 1 to 11 help to improve the comprehension of a text in English? Why?

2. Do I consider teamwork is necessary to better comprehend a reading text in English? Why?

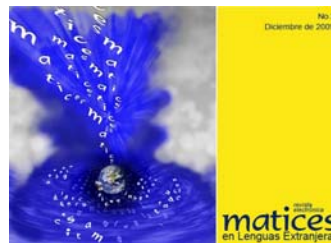
3. When I clarify my doubts about the reading, do I feel motivated? Why?

⁴ This instrument was designed based on the ideas of the following authors: Day & Bamford (1998), Gunning (2000) and Oxford (1990).

4. What do I do to reduce my anxiety when the text in English, which is being read, is not interesting, too long, or simply I did not understand it?

I really appreciate the time spent to take part in this educational research.

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