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STUDENTS' READING MICRO-SKILLS DEVELOPMENT IN AN ENGLISH COURSE AT A FOUNDATION IN BOGOTA

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Abstract

This research study presents the implementation of bottom-up and top-down strategies for the fostering of reading micro-skills development with children and early teenagers in English language classes at a Foundation in Bogotá. With the implementation, the study seeks to determine the manner in which these two strategies may help students reach improvements in reading short tales and stories. The study follows the principles and steps of Action Research. Data were collected through teacher journal, observations, and students' artifacts. Eventually, data were analyzed by performance analysis to see the levels of development of reading micro-skills, and content analysis to unveil the manner in which the development happens. Findings reveal that reading micro-skills, either at top-down or bottom-up approach, impulse advances when the readings account for a multiplicity of those skills instead of one-by-one in isolation. Discussion on the emerging micro-skills along with the strategies proposed describes considerable achievements in the participant students at the Foundation, which serve when implementing reading skills in English language syllabi for children and early teens.

*Key words***:** reading micro-skills, children, teenagers, bottom-up / top-down strategies, action research.

Resumen

Este estudio de investigación presenta la implementación de las estrategias ascendentes y descendentes para fomentar el desarrollo de las micro-habilidades de lectura con niños y jóvenes adolescentes, en una clase de inglés de una Fundación de Bogotá. Con la implementación se busca determinar la manera en la cual estas dos estrategias pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a obtener mejores beneficios en la lectura de cuentos cortos e historias. El estudio sigue los principios de la Acción Investigación. La información fue recolectada a través de los diarios de campo docentes y los artefactos de los estudiantes. Eventualmente, la información fue analizada por el análisis de rendimiento para ver los niveles de desarrollo en lectores con las micro-habilidades de lectura y el análisis de contenido para mostrar la manera en que el desarrollo se da. Los hallazgos revelan que las micro-habilidades, y también las estrategias ascendentes y descendentes, impulsan avances cuando las lecturas tienen en cuenta la multiplicidad de esas habilidades en lugar de cada una por separado. La discusión gira entorno a las actividades propuestas, y los logros significativos en los estudiantes participantes en la Fundación, los cuales sirven para tener en consideración, la implementación de micro-habilidades de lectura en el syllabus para niños y adolescentes.

Palabras clave: micro-habilidades de lectura, niños, jóvenes, estrategias ascendente y descendente, investigación acción.

Résumé

Cette étude de recherche présente la mise en œuvre de stratégies ascendantes et descendantes pour favoriser le développement de micro-compétences en lecture avec des enfants et des adolescents débutants dans des cours de langue anglaise dans une Fondation à Bogotá. Avec la mise en œuvre, l'étude vis à déterminer la manière dont ces deux stratégies peuvent aider les élèves à améliorer leurs connaissances en lecture de contes courts et

d'histoires. L'étude suit les principes et les étapes de la recherche d'action. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen du journal des enseignants, des observations et des artefacts des élèves. Finalement, les données ont été analysées à travers un analyse de performance pour voir les niveaux de développement des micro-compétences en lecture et l'analyse de contenu pour dévoiler la manière dont le développement se produit. Les résultats révèlent que la lecture de micro-compétences, soit en approche ascendante ou descendante, favorise les progrès lorsque les lectures représentent une multiplicité de ces compétences au lieu d'une à l'autre isolément. La discussion sur les micro-compétences émergentes, ainsi que les stratégies proposées décrit des réalisations considérables chez les étudiants participants de la Fondation, servent à prendre en considération lors de la mise en œuvre des compétences en lecture dans les syllabes de langue anglaise pour les enfants et les adolescents.

Mots clés: micro-compétences en lecture, enfants, adolescents débutants, stratégies ascendantes et descendantes, la recherche d'action.

Students' Reading Micro-Skills Development in an English Course at a Foundation in Bogota

Introduction

Research studies on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading have shown that the effectiveness of its comprehension is crucially involved with the process of learning a second language (see for example, Brown, 2001; Onochie-Quintanilla, Defior, & Simpson, 2016; Li & Li, 2016). As part of the basis process of a second language (L2, English in this article), the potential of reading micro-skills in learners has also been explored, and since it refers to identifying the knowledge acquired from the reading activities, the results have evidenced considerable improvements in English language learners when using this as a second language (see for instance Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016; Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016).

For L2 learners, the course of action involved in reading comprehension considers series of interrelations with language skills to get a full understanding of the reading materials provided. Simultaneously, this process uncovers a variety of abilities that learners shape in their different learning stages. Since the abilities are derived from the language skills themselves and they may vary in each learning stage, Brown (2001) has developed a list of reading micro-skills that cover the categories of proficiencies shown by learners while reading.

Reading micro-skills are those specific L2 competencies amplified by learners when using a second language (Brown, 2001). Thus, the improvement of reading micro-skills in L2 learners allocates a better comprehension of the L2 as well as it provides them with the possibility of using the knowledge acquired interchangeably with other language skills. Skills such as listening or speaking are also essential for communication and can lead to other learning procedures by focusing on understanding and production of concepts or

representations, while reading specifically, measured by reading micro-skills, points to the construction of language by integrating the other language skills.

Thus, according to Brown (2001), reading can provide L2 learners with mental structures for internalizing concepts or representations, plus producing inferences and interpretation. Besides, reading is a receptive skill that cannot be considered passive, due to the wide collection of results that raise during its implementation. Reading micro-skills work as the required competences that allow L2 learners to understand meaning in L2 teaching materials.

By taking into account all the above mentioned aspects, the research study presented throughout this article focuses on the use of instructed reading micro-skills in a group of children and a group of early teens. To perform the study, we decided to establish our implementation at a Foundation where our pedagogical practicum in English teaching took place. This Foundation is an independent, autonomous, and non-profit organization that offers low cost courses in different schedules, English is one of the courses. In this setting, we could identify several areas of opportunity in our class and in the English language syllabus.

After an analysis of the Foundation's English language syllabus, we noticed that reading skills were not that relevant for helping students improve their English level, although it was assessed strictly. In view of the importance of reading skills for L2 learning, we oriented our research study to help in the development of this language skill as part of the English language syllabus of the Foundation.

Exploring research studies done at La Salle University on reading micro skills, we found that none has been done for the Foundation's English syllabus. Covering all the courses of the syllabus was impossible, thus, we decided to cover two groups, one of

teenagers and the other of kids, both in true-beginners' level. This selection can make the findings more valuable and applicable in the Foundation with the other courses and levels.

During our theoretical exploration about reading skills for our study, we found Douglas Brown's (2001) theories on the issue. He talks about reading micro skills under bottom-up and top-down processing strategies. In relation to this, we wanted to join what this theory says about reading micro skills and the difficulties and situations that we encountered in our place of pedagogical practicum about the matter.

All in all, this research study then searches to determine how the implementation of EFL short readings under the bottom-up and top-down processing strategies served as a resource to develop reading micro skills in two groups of the Foundation, one of sixth-graders and the other of first-grades. The study aims at determining the manner in which the implementation can help develop these students' reading micro skills. Therefore, the improvements that they reveal in their reading micro skills through the implementation will be identified.

Conceptual Framework

As part of EFL, extensive research has been carried out revealing significant founding in terms of language skills and use. The understanding of reading skills in EFL learners has demonstrated a "unique opportunity for students to explore, interpret, and understand the world around them" (Bobkina & Stefanova, 2016, p. 677). Besides, the reading abilities developed in EFL learners may vary from phonetic awareness, and visual processing skills to cognitive abilities (Onochie-Quintanilla, Defior, & Simpson, 2016). Jointly, written language has also been registered in a variety of types and genres such as fictional, poetry (epic poetry), drama (plays, comedy, tragedy), and prose (novels, short stories).

In our research, we decided to work with short stories, as we have been able to identify from our previous experience with the students[1], short stories are a simple way to learn vocabulary and usually caught students' interests. Consequently, the need of designing an implementation for practicing reading with these students becomes essential, so that we could also work on their understanding of English.

Finding a definition of *reading* can be an extended work since there are many that may vary depending on the locus of enunciation. One of the definitions, Williams (1986), fits the purposes of this research study since it considers reading as "the process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written" (p. 2). This author considers that, in the process of understanding, a learner has not to comprehend everything which appears in the text, because the reader is not simply a passive object, fed with letters, words and sentences. However, as he also states, "actively working on the text, and is able to arrive at understanding without looking at every letter and word" (p. 2). Thus, reading is made in groups of words, not letter by letter, holding meaning.

In agreement with Schovel (1998), reading can be possible if students know the writing system with which the text was written. If students are not familiarized with the combination of a graphic system, it means letter, words, etc., the reading process cannot be possible. The same happens when the students do not know the context of the text. As is explained by Schovel, in the process of understanding reading, the student needs to have sufficient background which can help understand what the reading is about.

In the understanding of reading, recognizing the abilities that it develops is fundamental. When doing EFL readings, students usually learn new vocabulary. However, for understanding the reading structure, students have to develop other skills and find higher

[1] Our pedagogical practicum was for three academic semesters. We used the first to observe how the students did in reading activities, along with revising the Foundation's English language syllabus.

strategies to deal with ideas. Celce-Murcia (2001) mentions some, for example, identifying the sentences that convey the main ideas of the text, examining headings and subheadings in a text and then deciding what each section is about, creating headings for a set of paragraphs in the text, and giving a level of each and discussing the function of each paragraph.

These strategies to deal with the recognition of ideas in EFL readings prompt to interactive reading. This concept denotes the combination of lexical recognition of symbols, where graphemes and phonemes should be taught to get a lexical recognition first, then, the comprehension from the sum of the parts (Brown, 2001). Thus, students will get a better understanding on the reading they are doing, since the procedure begins from the fundamentals of language, which are the graphemes carrying meaning, to their own interpretation of the text. This progression is well described in bottom-up and top-down data processing, where the complementary understanding gives students the possibility of moving on from puzzle solving to inferring meanings respectively and retaining information.

The L2 reading process involves the interplay of two languages systems (Grabe, 2009; Hudson, 2007). When reading in a second language, students have access to their first language (L1, Spanish in this article) and often use their L1 as a reading strategy. However, L1 and L2 reading usually differ in many ways. Grabe (2009) indicates three major sets of differences: linguistic and processing differences, cognitive and educational differences, and sociocultural and institutional differences. In these differences, students from L1 learn to read after they have used the oral language for around 5 or 6 years. When L1 learners read, they already know most of the grammatical structures and vocabulary of this language. Unlike L1 learners, L2 students learn to read at the same time they learn to express ideas in L2. Another difference is that L2 readers get to know the L2 better than the learners from L1, because the last group has a more tacit knowledge of their native language.

Complementarily, in the cognitive and educational differences, L2 learners are influenced by their L1, because they already have a construction about how language works. Thus, their native language abilities represent what can be expected from them when learning a second language. The sociocultural and institutional differences depend on many variables such as conceptions about reading, cultural context, and assumptions on how to use technology resources. Regarding the institutional aspect, another distinction between L1 and L2 reading is the way in which students are shaped because of the type of education they get. For instance, teachers' behaviors, national exams, classroom management and teachers' training. Although, L1 and L2 reading differ in all these ways, in order to understand L2 reading, it is necessary to understand what role L1 literacy plays in the development of L2 reading (Hudson, 2007).

One of the main ideas is that the language that learners use is not simply the result of differences between the language(s) that they already know and the language that they are learning, but that it is a complete language system in its own right, with its own systematic rules. This is known as interlanguage. However, languages that learners already know can have a significant influence on the process of learning a new one. Thus, the major emphasis on EFL reading is the way in which students construct the meaning and the relation that this fact has with their context, as Brown (2001) indicates. Due to this, EFL readings must provide other faculties such as contextualization and references so that students can internalize information and use it. This last progression makes part of one of the skills that Brown (2001) mentions in his theory; EFL students acquiring skills to interpret meaning in readings.

The following Table 1 shows Brown's (2001) reading micro skills, which summarizes all the above mentioned insights:

Table 1: Brown's Micro-Skills for Reading Progression. Discriminate among the distinctive

graphemes and orthographic patterns of English.
Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory.
Providing a faster answer in both; written and oral way thanks to a better understanding of the readings.
Recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance.
Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization) patterns, rules, and elliptical forms.
Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms
Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses.

The given micro-skills constitute the construction of meaning for EFL students while reading. The same can be evaluated through their individual achievement. This means that each student's results of micro-skills cause them to obtain an understanding of the reading in progress. The fact of observing the results of the reading micro-skills in combination is key, since the abilities that students can develop from the implementation of bottom-up and top-down readings may vary depending on the contexts, language needs, and the different learning styles the students have.

Research Methodology

Our study follows the steps of Action Research. Stringer (2014) explains that action research is a systematic approach to investigation that enables teachers to find effective solutions to problems they confront in their everyday classes. The research question arises from events, problems, or professional interests that the educators deem important. The practitioners carry out their investigations systematically, reflectively, and critically using strategies that are appropriate for their practice. Constant evaluation of the implementation is part of doing action research.

In our study research, we decided to implement this methodology as it constitutes a process where both students and teachers are involved. The first step was to plan the activities that were going to be perform during each session. Over the classes, we

implemented what had been planned previously and we also collected the major amount of data by means of using the data collection instruments, which will be mentioned and explained later on. After getting all the data from each session, we started reflecting upon what needed to be changed in the next classes, what had worked, and what the students' reactions to the strategies and the activities applied during the class were. Consequently, we could also reflect on our own practice in order to find out what needed to be changed or improved.

This process is explained in the next graphic:

Graphic 1. Explains Action Research Process according to Wallace (1997)

This study took place at ASE Foundation. This foundation searches to help students with their difficulties in different areas such as; Spanish, Mathematics, and English. We decided to implement our research in two different groups; one of children and the other of

early teens, as we considered necessary to get different results from different contexts, in order to get more valuable results and analyze variables and similarities.

The group of children was made of 32 students around 9 and 12 years old, the syllabus covered basic topics, such as places, colors, parts of the body, parts of the house, animals and senses. In the case of teenagers, they were 13 students around 13 and 17 years old. For this course, the syllabus included communicative skills instead of topics in isolation, they had to be able to introduce themselves and other people being aware of nationalities, professions and occupations, and respond to descriptions of places and people. The English level for both groups was A1 and the classes were given at a state elementary school.

Data collection instruments. Three instruments were used during the study to collect information about the participant students' development of reading micro skills all along the implementation: observations, students' artifacts done in class, and teacher journal.

***Observations*.** Observation is a systematic data collection approach. Researchers use all their senses to examine people in natural settings or naturally occurring situations. Schmuck (1997) points out that observation techniques are useful to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities. With this technique, we want to identify meaningful improvement in the participant students' reading micro skills, one by one as indicated in Table 1.1 above.

Students' artifacts (Written samples and pictures). Written samples are all the different exercises that the participant students are going to develop during the research study such as compositions, posters, letters, comics, etc. (Morrow & Schocker, 1987). These participant students' written papers are going to be assessed by using the indicated reading

micro skills (Table 1.1) in order to explore the process that they carry out in creating and recreating the short stories provided in class.

To give evidence of the students' artifacts for the analysis, we took pictures of these written samples. Through the use of photographs, we were able to see not only the development of reading micro skills in the participant students but also the product which resulted from the activities, environment, and interactions.

Teacher's journal. Wiegerová (2013) explains that a journal is a personal document of the teacher. It is used to capture the passed through and subjectively experienced situations and events. It is exactly the subjective experience of teachers and all events at school that they consider important, what they think may affect them that may point to new circumstances, which are tied with how teachers experience situations at school. Teacher journal may help to develop professional competences of a teacher. However, it may also work as an instrument for coming to terms with redundant emotions, which accompany the first steps of a teacher at school. For this reason, writing a journal may be a certain instrument for materialization of feelings and opinions that are hard to be expressed verbally (p. 240).

In the teacher journals that we used in the study, we described the participant students' attitudes, participation, dynamics and interactions during the three stages of the reading sessions; before reading or pre-reading, while reading activities and after reading or post-reading. We could denote how they progressively change session after session. We then wrote down their predominant attitudes while the implementation.

The Implementation of Bottom-Up and Top-Down Strategies. Each reading session had three stages:

- *Before reading or pre-reading*. This stage gives the time to introduce the topics, develop scanning or skimming, and activate students' pre-knowledge about the

written text. Some common activities include steps such as: previewing the text where students can distinguish features of the text such as the title, subheadings, illustrations and captions and determine the general topic of the reading, relevant vocabulary, and possible challenges.

- *While reading activities*. In this stage, the students have the opportunity to get the main idea of the text, and take notes for the comprehension of the text. It also gives a sense to the reading. According to Stoller (1994), during reading instruction, students have the possibility to understand difficult concepts, making sense of complex structures, reading for specific purpose. Some commonly activities include the following: outlining or summarizing key ideas in a difficult section, examining emotions and attitudes of key characters, looking for answers to questions posed during pre-reading activities, among others.
- *After reading or post-reading*. This stage includes activities that use text information in other tasks, as for example, reading to write. According to Stoller (1994) during post-reading instructions students extend ideas and information from the text while tries to support the information read. The following are some of the most commonly activities to implement during the reading sequences of this study: completing a graphic organizer (e.g. table, chart, etc.) based on text information, answering questions that demonstrate comprehension of the text, demand a critical stance on text information, or oblige students to connect text information to personal experiences and opinions, among others.

Data analysis methodology. For the analysis of the data collected in the observations, students' artifacts, and teachers' journal, the Content Analysis and Performance Analysis methodologies were followed.

Content analysis. Works over analyzing a complete view of speech or text and their specific contexts focusing on a procedure that involves: prepare the data, define the unit of analysis, develop the categories, test your coding scheme, code the text, assess coding, and drawing conclusions (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). These six steps were done taking into account the procedure we were following. The data prepared, for example, was already selected from the pilot session where we decided that we had to work with short stories to catch learners' attention. The units of analysis as referring to the themes were the proficiencies observed during the sessions and documented in the teachers' journals. With this, we could develop the categories or micro-skills for our case and coding those using colors to interpret the results. For testing our coding scheme, we had to revise our journals and evidences and verify that all the proficiencies had been properly registered to be later coded. A rigorous procedure had to be done, since evidences were checked over and over again and we exchange material to draw the final assumptions. This procedure led us to have a better organization of the information since it provides the step-by-step instructions for coding.

Performance analysis. A longitudinal study generally yields multiple or "repeated" measurements on each subject. Singer and Willett (2003) assert that longitudinal data sets are comprised observations of an outcome, in which it is possible to measure change. As this type of study is necessary for studying change, it helped us answer our research question because we wanted to evidence how much students have improved in their reading micro skills through this project. To do so, we analyzed the artifacts and the teacher's journal. We compare all the student's samples and teacher's journal through the different sessions so that we could observe different aspects such as what type of vocabulary and expressions they were using, if they were new and different, if their spelling was improving and if they were using vocabulary from previous sessions and from the readings.

Results

We organize the results by each micro-skill. We will disclose each with a description of what it is and the examples that support it from both groups. There are two parts, one belongs to the findings related to 5th graders and the second belongs to the findings related to 8th graders. For better understanding, we will refer to Group 1 and Group 2 respectively.

We classified the results in regards to reading micro-skills. Initially, we present the manner in which the students in both groups developed proficiency in reading by following Brown's (2001) list of micro-skills of reading (see Table 1 above), say, discriminating graphemes, retaining chunks of language, recognizing a core of words and their type, and interpreting their significance. After this explanation, we introduce emergent reading micro-skills that the students in both groups perform, which are not part of Brown's list. They are representing, recycling, combining, mimicking, conversing, using interlanguage, and doing intertextuality.

By now, we start with the reading micro-skills that Brown (2001) has included in his list and that the participant students in this research study have displayed in their performance.

Discriminating graphemes. In this micro-skill the participant students presented several variations when articulating sounds and recognizing them in English. In the case of Group 1, fifth graders, the participant students presented difficulties when articulating the vowel sounds of [a-e-i] and consonants [h-g-j-k-q-c-s-z-r-w], having a tendency of pronouncing the vowels as done in their first language (Spanish in this study). In addition, they showed that they were able to recognize the meaning of English words when heard, however when writing them down, as they perceive it could sound in Spanish (see Picture 1, with word sounds such as /grin/ or /llelow/).

Picture 1: Evidence of articulation of the sounds /llelow/ and /grin/

In both groups, the students seemed to have a perception of the words but the tendency of interlanguage was still present, so they did not include letters that do not sound in Spanish, such as [h]. Equally, minimal pairs generate confusion when understanding messages, words such as [it] and [eat]. However, they were able to comprehend full messages without the aim of translation and writing words down, just by associating them in their L1. For example, when the teacher was giving the instructions or commands, they could identify them and follow them in an easier way, since they were related to their other classes at school.

This situation demonstrates that interlanguage is part of their learning process (Tarone, 2006). To exemplify it, observation proved that learners tended to associate commands, instructions, drawings and mimics in their L1, saying them aloud and acting correspondingly. Little by little, the translations started to disappear and the students were

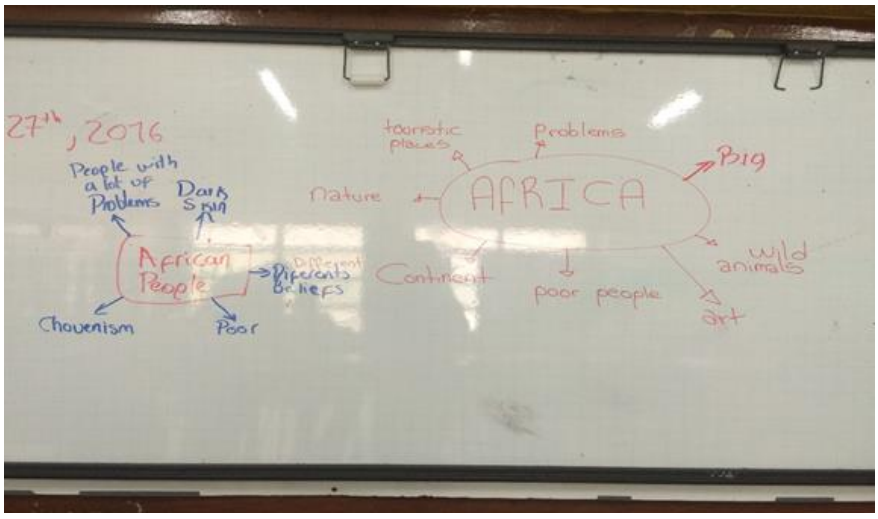
just focusing on finishing their task before the others. For the accurate pronunciation, it was necessary to implement several practices such as imitation, repetition, articulation, etc.

With respect to repetition, specifically, students were presented with a model to practice and an explanation about how to modulate the difficult sounds. For this, we reviewed the parts of the mouth with a diagram and then explained where for example the tongue needs to go when doing a specific sound. This explanation helped the students to start thinking in the areas in which they needed to focus to produce certain sounds. The participant students of both groups presented high levels of improvements in pronunciation and a tendency to participate more in the activities when they were fostered to do it in groups or challenge to participate in contests. Evidence of this is that, when pronunciation was assessed, we noticed how the students progressively were more fluent and in addition, sounds which were difficult for them to produce in words such as; comfortable, woman vs women, population and education improved considerably and in consequence they started becoming more clear.

As we mentioned before, we implemented different strategies in order to help students improve their pronunciation such as activities in which students could practice minimal pairs or tongue twisters. During the last three sessions, the participant students of both groups started to developed independence, and even when they still presented difficulties in pronunciation, they were concerned about the accuracy of the spelling of the words so they kept checking if the words were properly written or spoken.

Retaining chunks of language. In group 1 with fifth graders, the participant students were more likely to retain words and chunks of information when these words or ideas were expressed with mimics or drawings (e.g. words such as "driving", "writing", "saying", "running" were easily to mimic and they understood them faster). This also influences on the way in which top-down activities were carried out since the same mimics

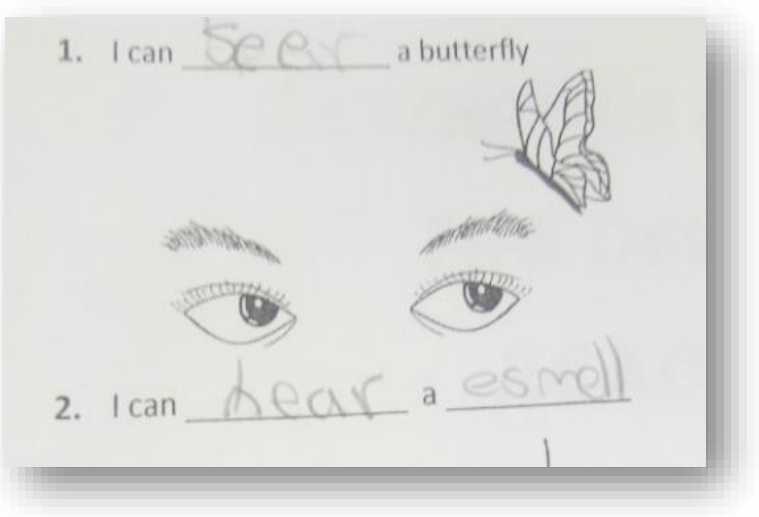
used for the construction were used for the commands. The results show that there is an immediate understanding of the commands given. In some cases, these commands were even used for others as a reference for achieving the goal in the activity developed. In Group 2, eighth graders, at the beginning of the implementation, the students were able to retain information but they presented difficulties for articulating the information in chunks. For instance, in session number two, when they were asked to briefly summarize the reading, they used specific sentences from it. For example, students could say complete, simple, well-structured sentences such as "Mandela and Tambo disagreed with the apartheid". Eventually, as the reading activities progressed, they started to use some expressions and vocabulary in both speaking and writing.



Picture 2: Evidence of 8th grade learners, using key words they remembered from the reading.

Providing a faster answer in both; written and oral way thanks to a better understanding of the readings

In Group 1, during the first sessions, the participant students started to copy the answers of the exercises directly from the texts, without being aware of the meaning of the words. They could not remember exactly what pieces of information they should collect from the reading and they were also mixing graphemes. After two sessions of deconstruction and construction of meaning inside the texts, they started to develop independence and they could use and represent the words easily, as illustrated in the following picture in which the recognition of the commands given and the places where they had to look for the information is correct:

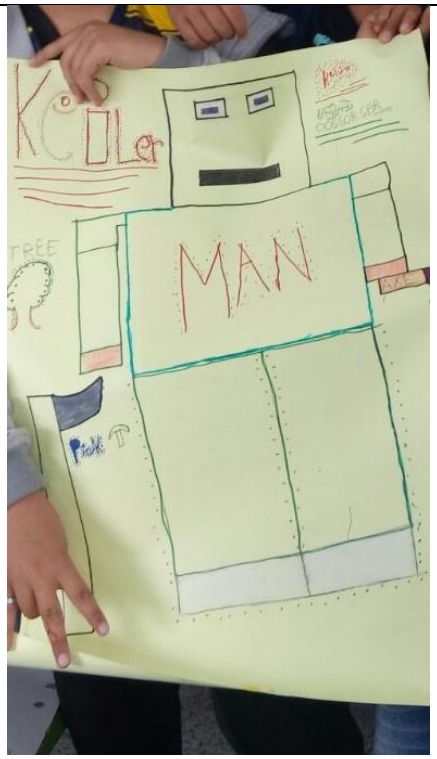


Picture 3: Evidence of 5th grade learners showing responses to an independent exercise.

In the case of Group 2, the participant students presented difficulties when writing a text or answering the questions in written. Besides, they took more than expected providing solution to the activity, however, they were able to answer the questions orally, using interlanguage to find the definitions. For the artifacts in both groups, the participant students demonstrate concern for writing the information correctly in order to show their products to

their peers. In other words, they focus on showing their improvements or creations to others, more than communicating during the first sessions.

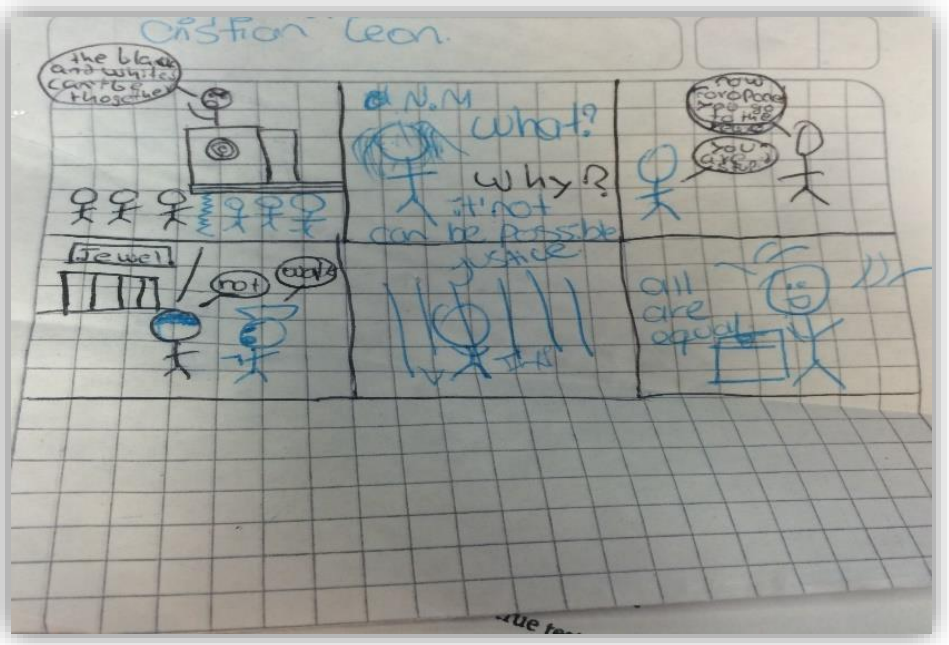
Recognizing a core of words, and interpreting their significance. In Group 1, the participant students were able to easily identify the meaning of words with the aid of graphical representation or mimics. They also demonstrated facility to answer questions, provided the same pictures were pointed out as the answer, as illustrated in the following picture:



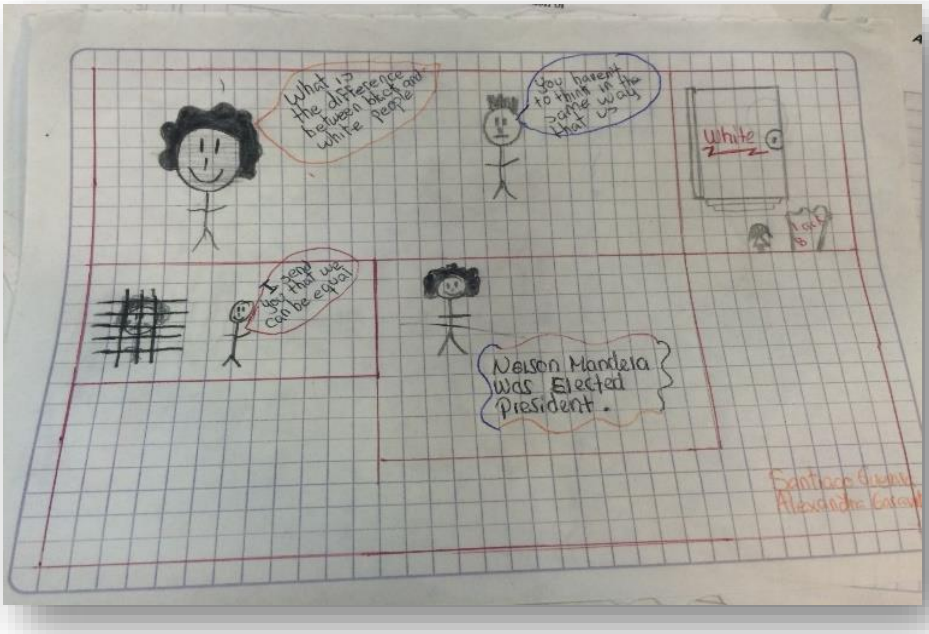
Picture 4: Evidence of the oral activity requirement fulfilled. Final artifact of Session 3.

The picture shows how the students were able to remember words just by looking at the drawings as they pointed them out. Conversely, in Group 2, most of the students demonstrated it through the development of their writing tasks, although some of them emphasized more on content than on form, meaning, a grasp of ideas but not well written, language accuracy was not present (e.g. *me speak people and convencer they* = I speak

before people to convince them), although they were able to relate ideas, gave their own opinions and illustrated them, as seen in the next picture below. It happened during the second session, the students had to create a comic after having read the text: Nelson Mandela and the Democracy in South Africa. Here is what two of them created:



Picture 5: Evidence 1 of the use of English in the artifact (Comic).



Picture 6: Evidence 2 of the use of English in the artifact (Comic) Same session of class that in picture 1.

This sequence of ideas showed us that students who did these comics lack or word choice and correct grammatical structures. Despite this lack, the illustrations showed the ideas were given in the text. They were also doing some drawings in which they explained part of the readings. They painted a jail, in order to represent the lack of freedom and show that feelings were prohibited there. Another instance was when they needed to express orally main ideas from the text, this is some of the information they provided:

"We don't have <u>equality"(sic)</u>

"The prison not prohibit the sentiments of iguality"

There, students had the necessity to express knowledge, so, for this reason, they focused more on content rather than form. Moreover, they also tried to make sense of key ideas, although they did not use the formal linguistic forms. Thus, for the case of words recognition, the students in both groups had the chance of checking drawings and being able

to remember words from previous sessions, as a consequence, they were able to relate meaning from previous words and connect it to understand the texts given.

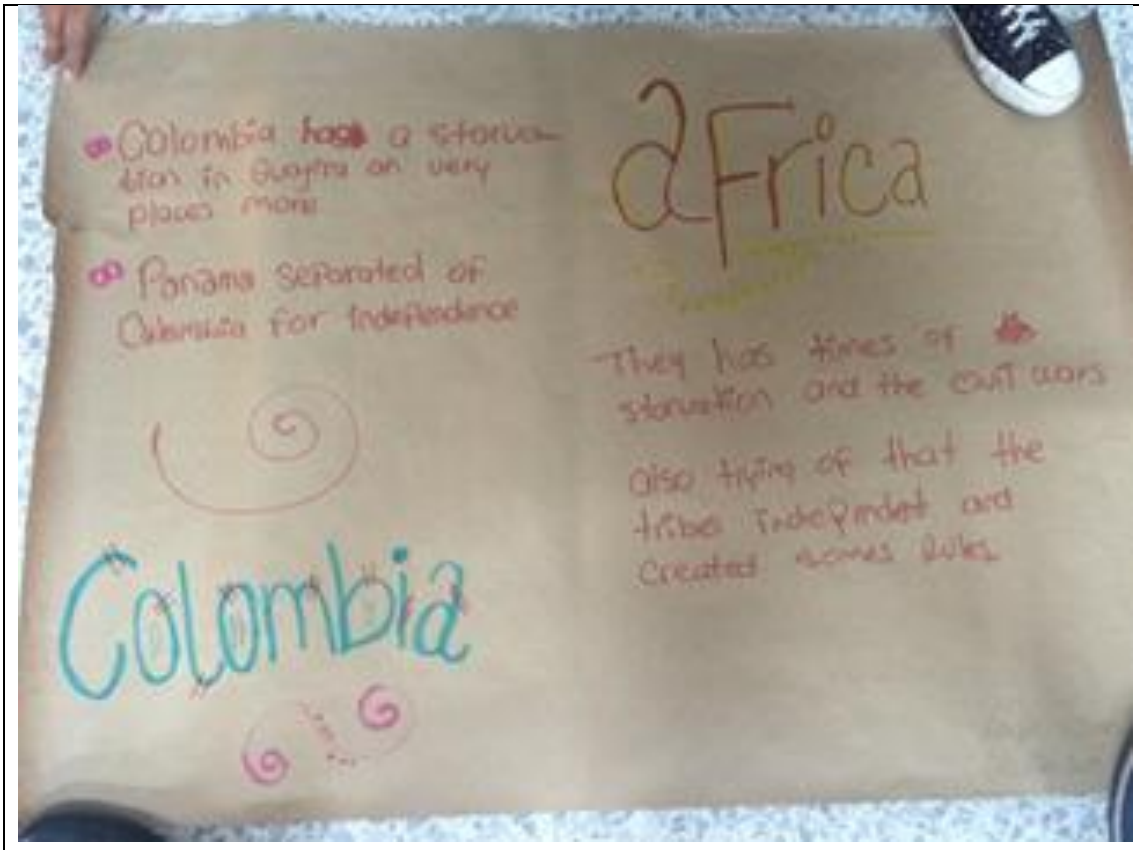
Recognizing grammatical word classes. In Group 1, we could identify that the student had just a distinction of singular and plural as reading them in the text during the pre-reading exercises. They could distinguish words such as "apple" from "apples" and understand the difference. Responses for identification were given in L1. In group 2, students had difficulties when recognizing grammatical word classes. In addition, we could see that they even had difficulties in their L1. Here we show some examples:

**Africa is a place not development in the world.*

Teacher's corrections: Africa is not a developed place in the world.

**They are many wars.*

Teacher's corrections: They have many wars.



Picture 7: Evidence 3 of the use of English in the artifact (Comic). Evidence of grammar difficulties.

As we can see in these examples, the students tried to communicate the ideas gotten from the texts, but they had difficulties with the correct use of plurals, verbs and adjectives. In fact, we can highlight that although the students lacked of accuracy, they were able to take relevant elements from the reading to express the central idea of it.

These were the reading micro-skills that the participant students in this research study have displayed in their performance and that are part of Brown's (2001) reading micro-skills. Below, we now present the derived micro-skills of reading that the participant students displayed while doing reading activities with our implementation.

Derived reading micro-skills. A foreword, we found that Brown's (2001) reading micro-skills develop other features that were not classifiable within the same micro-skills of

reading. These new micro-skills, which complement Brown's list, were a result of our implementation. During the coding, we realized they were new emergent skills. As a consequence, we wanted to make sure that they were constituted by the reading Brown's principles, such as being the abilities developed by students when scanning the text. Departing from Brown's micro-skills, then we verified if the students' emergent performance in reading were part of them or new ones.

In accordance to this, we must add that the creation of this derived micro-skills was done since Brown's (2001) list is covering the results in a textual way, while the derivations of these categories expand them from the textual to the drawings and meanings. This denotes that Brown's micro-skills are conceived only within the texts, in contrast, our derived micro-skills may open the possibility to see the things not only in one text but also in relation between different texts. This reading strategy is recognized as intertextuality. In agreement with Ivanic (1998), intertextuality creates an interrelationship between texts, as it generates related understanding in separate texts. That interrelationship gets foundation on the students' prior knowledge and understanding of the text topic (Hebel, 1989).

Additionally, in Brown's (2001) list of reading micro-skills, cognitive work is covered: recognizing, inferring, using, and conveying. Thus, the expansion that emergent and derived micro-skills offer may expand the theory when learners can exchange ideas by connecting, recycling, representing, conversing and combining this cognitive work with the texts. This is how Brown's work demonstrates what learners do while carrying on reading activities. Our concern is that the activities and ways in which learners perform that understanding while reading are not much specified, neither is the interlanguage process, or the context where they may emerge.

Without being pretentious, or neglecting Brown's (2001) work, which is really orienting and sustained, the results of our study show "how" the participant students, in that

context, with their background knowledge, are able to represent what they have learned during short text readings. The following Table 2 shows our derived reading micro-skills:

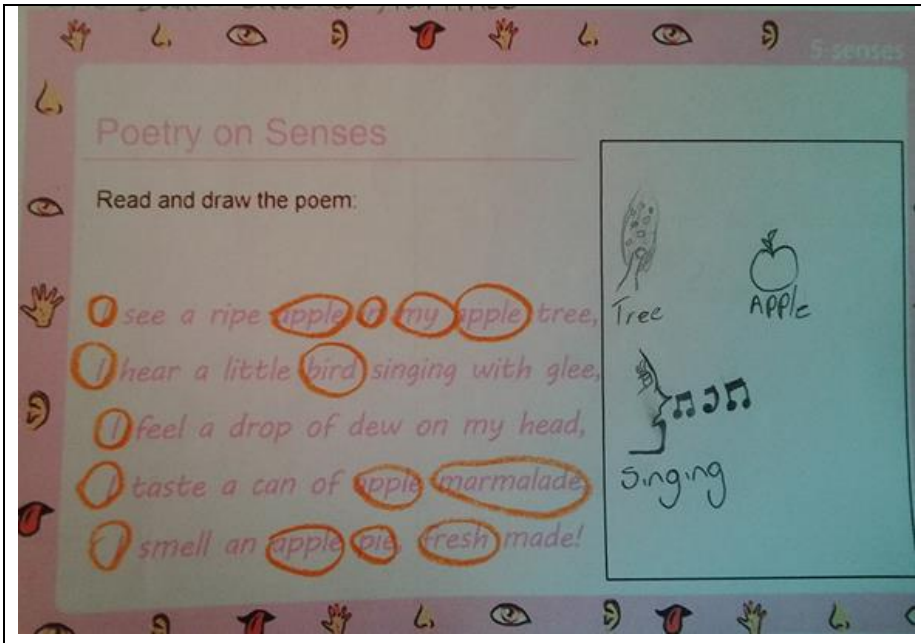
Representing	The reader is able to create or understand ideas departing from drawings
Recycling (oral)	The reader is able to use language that he has already learned in other situations
Combining	The reader is able to combine previous knowledge of language (recycled knowledge) and apply it to current job
Mimicking	The readers are able to associate the meaning of a word when teachers use mimics to communicate
Conversing an artifact:	The readers are able to reproduce ideas of the reading using different means such as artifacts
Using Interlanguage	The readers make use of their first language (L1) to understand L2 and as part of as a communicative strategy
Doing Intertextuality	The readers are able to establish connections among readings, remembering the meaning of words and using the vocabulary learned

This can be seen in the evidences below. Here, there are two examples of these micro-skills that were showed by students during the implementation.

Picture 8: Evidence 4 of the use of representation in the artifact (Comic). Evidence of

grammar drawings.

In this evidence, learners illustrate the key words found in one of the text by drawing the concepts as they imagine them. Checking this artifact, we realized that learners had a tendency to understand the text by associating the drawings and making them from the concepts they have from the reading.



Picture 9: Evidence 5 of intertextuality in the reading (Poem). Evidence of words identification between texts.

Other example of one reading micro-skill is intertextuality. Learners were able to identify words they have read in other texts within new readings, correlating meaning for later activities. Besides, they were mixing this micro-skill with drawing representation. Here the evidences suggest that learners had adapted more micro-skills than the ones we had reference from.

This is an expansion on Brown's theory because, as Brown says, the skills can be only developed by using bottom-up and top-down strategies. In our case, we have these two reading strategies as perspectives, showing that the creation of reading micro-skills has to

consider them. The influence of the results provides additional information about learning processes and understanding of the reading of short text, with children, Spanish-English interlanguage, and with the account of these students' background knowledge of the texts provided.

Discussion: Reading Micro-skills Are Not Static

After applying our study and considering Brown's position regarding reading micro-skills, we must highlight certain points of convergence with his theory as well as what the representation of our findings means. First, we can say that reading micro-skills refer to categories of the proficiencies developed by L2 learners. Besides, reading comprehension is entirely efficient when a set of strategies are used to drive learners' reading skills, as Brown's study discloses. In other words, L2 reading micro-skills can be fostered by procedures that enhance each proficiency. However, if we analyze all the micro-skills as a whole and through the implementation of top down and bottom up strategies, other micro-skills can emerge. In our viewpoint and after studying Browns' theory about micro-skills, we perceived that Brown conceives each micro-skill independently. Our query is not seeing the micro-skills independently but as a whole. As our results demonstrate, this perspective allows the emergence of new situated micro-skills.

One of the aspects we observed from our study in that particular context is that the derived micro-skills became visible when there was an understanding of several texts combined (intertextuality) and when the graphical or physical representations were used or taken for the class. In the artifacts we used to collect the information and analyze it, we observed that some of the findings could not be classified with Brown's reading micro-skills, meaning that context is a significant variable in the micro-skills an EFL reading process can obtain.

This means that the artifacts required as the goal of the class were just one part of the full understanding learners could get, so Brown's micro-skills just cover goals obtained in the context of his study not taking into account diversification of context.

In addition, students understood that language is more for understanding the texts and grammar structures for grasping information and answer to the requirements of the class. Sometimes the students went beyond and applied them in other tasks, such as mimics and drawings. Although this interlanguage use denoted difficulties at the beginning of the sessions, eventually it allowed them to articulate ideas and develop independence for providing answers to the exercises proposed. This fact is not reflected in depth in Brown's micro-skills since they do not specify if they are gotten in L1 or L2.

Besides, the advances that the students showed during the sessions included the aid of graphical and physical representation, which little by little became essential for explaining and depicting elements that later grew into full ideas. Hence, the students did not focus on form but on meaning which was helpful for making the artifacts and became fundamental to put ideas from other texts and exchanging them in other scenarios, not only the ones proposed for the class, but also new scenarios as the patio or talks with friends. This fact means that the students did not only recognize, infer, use and convey meaning but they were also able to connect, recycle, represent, converse and combine it within their school contexts.

As a consequence, Brown's reading micro-skills were extended, since the fact of having new emerging data, which later shaped into our derived micro-skills, could possibly mean that reading micro-skills are not static but they are always prompt to emergence according to varied contexts. Respectively, reading micro-skills are not given by a particular strategy or procedure, they emerge from learners in a spontaneous way, as they can be fostered by varied teaching strategies.

This connects to the bottom-up and top-down strategies, which contribute to gain understanding of L2. Our results display that both can be seen as a whole, and not one separated from the other. In the manner in which we implemented our study, we could disclose new information in regards to the students' reading micro-skills by using both strategies complementarily. Consequently, when carrying out bottom-up and top-down strategies in this way, established or derived micro-skills could merge transforming individual proficiencies into evolving learning abilities. Example of this is the emergence of the reading micro-skill of representing, which came out from the type of implementation we did, the type of students we had, and the contents we thought. Further research can prove if proposed new reading micro-skills emerge through a different implementation of reading micro-skills, or in another context with other students. What if other new reading micro-skills emerge? Then, we could not say that reading micro-skill are static and unique for every L2 teaching context, or that every L2 learner should develop them as listed. Our hypothesis is that it is not possible because it did not happen in our study.

Conclusions

Throughout this article the relevance of reading as a language skill for L2 learners has been displayed. In order to classify L2 learners' experiences in reading, Brown (2001) has collected some proficiency categories and established them as reading micro-skills. In our study we have found that even when Brown's reading micro-skills do represent an essential L2 skill to foster L2 learning, the context directly influences in the development of them. For this, reading micro-skills should be analyzed as a whole, and they should be constantly monitored to guarantee a full understanding of texts and knowledge internalization.

This is why, the objective of our study was to determine how the implementation of EFL readings under the bottom-up and top-down processing strategies show

developments in the two groups of students. In relation to our findings, the first aspect to point out is that what learning provides to readers is the structure to follow a pattern, and if use it correctly, reading can lead to internalize language and have appropriation of ideas or concepts in a quick way. This may happen because when reading, even in L1 language, learners have to find the interpretation of words or chunks by themselves and connect the ideas within the same texts for understanding. Thus, the independence of following their own path to do so proves a more permanent and meaningful result in their memory.

Furthermore, the aid of physical representations and contextualization of the text demonstrate in our study that L2 readers, in different stages and with multiple learning styles, can adapt their own representations to stick to the process. Consequently, they can infer meaning and create assumptions that can allow them to integrate this information in further class tasks. In consequence, L2 reading procedures are not static. One such example is the use of interlanguage, which helps in text interpretation and awareness of differences between L1 and L2.

The above-mentioned ideas of fostering micro-skills for a better understanding of reading as an essential tool of EFL learning suggest that the levels of development for readers can increase if the monitoring and study of reading micro-skills for each context are done. Therefore, the benefits obtained are not just for EFL learners but also for teachers implementing a reading syllabus. Once the micro-skills have been detected in a context, teachers can work on reading comprehension and other skills. This being said, reading micro-skills can help integrate other skills, and more, they can be constructed interestedly.

In our consideration, the implications of our study are mainly two: the first is the fact of confirming that there is no a static scenario when implementing reading micro-skills, they must be thought from all the possible perspectives. The second is the fact of being able to classify reading proficiencies into reading micro-skills to evidence the flexibility of reading

comprehension. Pedagogical design plays a role in detecting them out of the established lists of micro-skills of language abilities.

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