Building up Autonomy Through Reading Strategies

Formación en autonomía a través de estrategias de lectura

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This article reports on an action research project conducted with six ninth grade students in a rural public school in Colombia. The purpose of the study was to determine how the implementation of three reading strategies (skimming, scanning, and making predictions), when reading topics selected by learners, helps them to improve their reading comprehension and promotes their autonomy in the learning process. The results show that these learners developed some autonomous features such as making decisions for learning and doing assigned homework, increasing reading awareness and motivation. Additionally, the training on reading strategies allowed them to succeed in their reading comprehension. We conclude that these reading strategies are tools that take learners along the path of autonomy.

Key words: Autonomy, motivation, reading, reading strategies.

En este artículo se reportan los resultados de un proyecto de investigación-acción llevado a cabo con seis estudiantes de noveno grado en un colegio público rural. El propósito fue determinar el impacto de tres estrategias de lectura en inglés (identificar información específica, entender la idea principal y hacer predicciones) en la promoción de la autonomía y la compresión lectora. Los resultados evidenciaron que los estudiantes adquirieron algunos rasgos de autonomía, tales como tomar decisiones para aprender y hacer sus tareas asignadas, ser más conscientes de su proceso de lectura y estar más motivados para el aprendizaje. Así mismo, la capacitación referente a las estrategias de lectura les permitió mejorar su comprensión lectora. Se puede concluir que estas estrategias son herramientas que le sirven al estudiante para su formación en autonomía.

Palabras clave: autonomía, estrategias de lectura en inglés, lectura, motivación.

Introduction

This article reports the results of an action research project conducted with six ninth grade students in a rural public school in Gachetá, Cundinamarca, Colombia. The project aims at determining how the development of three reading strategies (skimming, scanning, and making predictions), when reading topics selected by learners, helps them to improve their reading comprehension and promotes their autonomy in the learning process.

Reading is one of the most vital skills that a person can acquire in his or her life because it is an interactive process which allows the reader to access information about the latest achievements of science and technology and transform it into knowledge. Reading in English will help the learner to get updated and in contact with knowledge regarding many issues such as agriculture, culture, economics, politics, tourism, and telecommunications. Moreover, reading in English is essential because people depend on the internet for information. An important aspect when dealing with English in Colombia is that students in state and private schools must take the *Saber PRO* exam in the eleventh grade in order to access higher education and the English component of this exam is based mainly on reading comprehension. However, we noticed that the students in our target group faced a variety of difficulties while reading in English. Even though they were expected to understand the main idea, make predictions, and identify specific information in a text, they could not do it. This was mainly due to the fact that they did not apply any strategy while reading in English and their reading skills were elementary. Consequently, we considered it useful to give them practice that helps them to develop three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and making predictions) that can promote autonomy. In addition, the learners were asked to select topics of their interest before we implemented the training program. The main purpose was to help them become effective and efficient readers as well as autonomous learners in terms of making decisions about their learning. With well-developed reading skills, learners would be expected to make greater progress and accomplish better results in their academic subjects.

Another important aspect to highlight regarding reading is its social dimension because reading operates in a social context. Wentzel (1996) supports this idea when reflecting on the importance of the social aspects of reading. Her position focuses on the fact that learners read for social reasons because they construct and share the meanings gleaned from reading with friends and family. By doing this, students in rural settings are able to learn by themselves, particularly by checking information about their work in the countryside. For instance, they can find new ways of managing and operating the farms for more effective cattle raising strategies, how to process and grow agricultural products like coffee, bananas, sugar cane, blackberries, and pineapple. Thus, applying these reading strategies will better help them to read effectively in English in order to broaden their perspectives about their quality of life; for example, to become better farmers, housewives, and merchants in the future because they will be able to read and keep updated about their environment and their living conditions.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the following theoretical constructs: autonomy, motivation, reading, and reading strategies.

Autonomy

Autonomy is a relevant issue nowadays because we live in a society which is constantly changing day

by day. Therefore, education must deal with those challenges it brings, which means that educators must provide learners with the appropriate strategies to be proactive. Autonomy has become a key issue in today's world, particularly because it offers learners the possibility of modifying and transforming their lives according to their needs. As a consequence, it is advisable that learners become aware of those new challenges that society presents and to be able to make their own decisions in their learning process. They must have the tools and skills to become responsible for their own duties by taking control of the process and finding the motivation to succeed.

The aforementioned features of autonomy will empower them to integrate themselves successfully in any context. Little (1991) supports this idea when reflecting on the importance of autonomy, defining it as the capacity to reflect critically, to make decisions, and to act independently. Autonomy refers to the way the learner transfers what he/she has learned to different contexts. Furthermore, Holec (1981) states that individuals must develop the abilities that society demands, and those abilities enable them to take more responsibility in solving the new challenges of the society they live in. Reflecting on the same issue, Dickinson (1995) highlights that autonomy is an attitude toward learning in which students are equipped to take responsibility for their learning. Also, Dickinson (1995) states that there is a link between autonomy and motivation due to the fact "that learning success and enhanced motivation are conditional upon learners taking responsibility for their own learning, being able to control their own learning and perceiving that their learning success or failure are to be attributed to their own efforts and strategies rather than to factors outside their control" (pp. 173-174). Consequently, Dickinson outlines that motivation is a condition for learners to become autonomous learners.

Motivation

We viewed motivation as a key factor to undertake a reading process, especially since our target group was particularly unmotivated to read and carry out their homework. The latter was considered a key point in this context since the learners had only two hours a week of class and homework allows them to practice and build up autonomy. We believed that the promotion of reading strategies as well as giving learners the opportunity to select reading topics by themselves would provide the motivation they needed to carry out the reading process in a meaningful way. Authors have stated that reading challenges can be overcome more easily if students are highly motivated to read. As Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) note:

> Motivation provides the primary impetus to initiate second or foreign language learning and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Without sufficient motivation, individuals with the most remarkable abilities cannot accomplish long term goals. Also, appropriate curricula and good teaching are not enough on their own to ensure student achievement. (pp. 55-56)

Similarly, Guthrie, Wigfield, Metsala, and Cox (1999) carried out two studies to explore the relationship between reading and motivation. They found that motivation had a major impact on reading comprehension, providing the best single explanation for reading performance. Motivation was also the strongest single factor predicting the amount of reading done by students (Guthrie et al., 1999).

Reading

Reading is an interactive process in which the reader gives sense and meaning to the issues he or she gets in touch with. Alderson (2000) defines reading as a "process of interaction between a reader and the text" (p. 3). In the same spirit, Nunan (1999) states that reading is an interactive

process that involves the exploitation of linguistic knowledge (sound, symbol correspondences, grammatical knowledge) and real-world (content) knowledge. He outlines that skilled readers have a range of strategies at their disposal and select those strategies that match the purposes for which they are reading.

Nuttall (1996) states that reading is the process of "getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message the writer put into it" (p. 4). Likewise, she states that effective reading involves "word attack," "sentence attack," and "text attack" skills. To her, reading involves not only looking at sentences and words and going through them at random but also recognizing and understanding them intellectually. This helps students to pick up new words, syntax, and writing styles.

Jiménez (2000) defines reading as "the learners' ability to interpret or work out the meaning of a written text and react towards it as a result" (p. 10). This means that comprehension is involved in this process. Her main concern is the development or improvement of this ability through the teaching and practice of reading strategies in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Ríos and Valcárcel (2005) state that reading is an individual process which develops self-study habits. Also, they think that reading is a good resource to have students become conscious of their own learning processes, particularly using reading strategies such as making predictions, skimming, scanning, extensive reading, and intensive reading.

Reading Strategies

Carrell (1989) states that "reading strategies are of interest to many researchers as they show how readers interact with the written material and in what way they are associated with text comprehension" (p. 121). Likewise, Cantrell and Carter (2009) state that reading strategies help educators to instruct effectively less proficient readers in their reading comprehension.

The three reading strategies used in this research were selected because they were basic for our learners to improve their ability to understand and process text. They are defined as follows:

- **Scanning** has to do with looking for "specific information, for example, the relevant times on a timetable, items in a directory, or key points in an academic text" (Hedge, 2003, p. 195). Williams (1996) states that "scanning is reading for particular points of information. It is a selective reading, and its purpose is to achieve very specific reading goals" (p. 107).
- **Skimming** deals with getting main ideas of the text without reading every single word. An example could be previewing a newspaper "by reading rapidly, skipping large chunks of information, and focusing on headings and first lines of paragraphs" (Hedge, 2003, p. 195). Nuttall (1996) defines skimming as:

  glancing rapidly through a text to determine its gist, for example in order to decide whether a research paper is relevant to our own work . . . or to keep ourselves superficially informed about matters that are not of great importance to us. (p. 49)

- **Making predictions** has to do with making assumptions regarding what the text is about based on the title, images, pictures, or charts and then reading to confirm expectations. Training learners in the use of this skill will ensure their active involvement and make reading easier to practice (Nuttall, 1982).

Method

We think that reading strategies are a useful tool to foster learners' reading proficiency and autonomy. By using this tool, learners will gain

meaningful insights about how to make decisions for learning and develop awareness about effective reading, motivation, and responsibility for their own tasks. We allowed the students to select the topics they wanted to read about in order to engage them in the reading process.

We used qualitative action research because we carried out a pedagogical intervention to solve a problematic situation which we identified through observation of our context. Likewise, in this study we had to analyze the specific situation of the classroom and collect data systematically on our everyday practices and analyze the data in order to identify the problem and make decisions to improve our future teaching practices (Wallace, 2002). We were interested in describing and theorizing about our students' reading strategies, particularly developing scanning, skimming, and making predictions.

Therefore, learners were expected to take some significant responsibility for their own learning, responding to instructions and, particularly, being expected to improve their reading comprehension and promote some features of autonomy such as making decisions for learning and setting up goals when reading about topics selected by them.

This action research project was set to answer the following research question: To what extent does the implementation of three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and making predictions), when reading about topics selected by learners, promote autonomy?

By answering the research question the researchers aimed to accomplish the objectives described below.

Research Objectives

General Objective

To determine how the implementation of three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and mak-ing predictions) promotes autonomy in reading when reading about topics selected by learners.

Specific Objective

To analyze the effects of student training in the three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and making predictions) on students' reading skills when reading topics selected by them.

Context and Participants

This study was carried out with a group of six students in ninth grade in a small rural agricultural public school where one of the researchers taught English. There were three girls and three boys aged 14 and 15 years old. These students come from a low socioeconomic background and belong to farm-ing families. The learners' parents never had the opportunity to go to school, so they cannot read and write. They believe that the farming chores are more important than studying, so learners must help them with the farming duties, particu-larly milking cows, feeding chickens, cows, horses, cooking the food, cutting grass, and felling trees. Additionally, none of the learners had a computer at home or any other resources such books or dic-tionaries plus they had to make a big effort to go to school by walking long distances.

The learners' English level was elementary because they only had the opportunity to learn it at school. They were particularly strong at writ-ing, but they had serious difficulties with reading comprehension.

Ethical Considerations

Participants in this study were volunteers. The main objectives and the activities were explained to them, to their parents, and the school prin-cipal through consent letters. The letters were in Spanish in order to avoid misunderstanding and the parents, the group of learners, and the

school principal understood each detail of the research project. The participants were told about the implications, benefits, and impact that the research project could have on their academic development.

Data Collection

A training program to promote reading strategies was implemented and data were collected from different sources as described below:

a. A students' pre-implementation, self-assessment checklist to compare with a similar instrument at the end of the implementation to see if the reading strategies have fostered autonomy and to analyze the effects of reading strategies training on students' reading skills (see Appendix A).

b. Three questionnaires (one for scanning, one for skimming, and one for making predictions) in order to check if learners have improved their reading skills and have developed autonomy. These questionnaires were used at the end of the implementation of each reading strategy (see Appendix B).

c. A post-lesson self-evaluation for the teachers in order to see what went well, what did not go so well, what were the lesson objectives, and if the reading strategies had been useful in fostering autonomy.

d. A students' post-implementation, self-assessment checklist to see if learners have developed better insights about autonomy in relation to the use of the three reading strategies and also to see if those strategies helped them to improve their reading skills (see Appendix C).

e. A reading achievement test: This test was necessary to know if learners had improved the process of using reading strategies to foster reading for main ideas and for specific information in a text. The test was administered at the end of the study.

Validity and Reliability

The information elicited from the five instruments was triangulated to find out if students had improved their autonomy and reading skills through the strategy training program.

The focus and amount of data obtained allowed us to determine whether or not the research question had been solved. In order to reach reliability, all the data were consistently and systematically placed in categories and subcategories. Likewise, we went along this research project through a number of "checkpoints" to make the research project valid. We had regular meetings to discuss how the project was going on following the "checkpoints." They included the following questions (Burns, 2010, pp. 130-131):

1. Is the focus of the research the right one?

2. Is the activity or strategy I am using to change the situation pedagogically sound? Is it of benefit to my students?

3. Do I need to go back and review my research questions? Do I need new questions?

4. Am I getting as rounded a picture as possible? Or am I relying on just one source of information that could be biasing what I find?

5. Am I being objective? Am I seeing things in the data as they really are, rather than how I want to see them?

6. Are there other people I can collaborate with or consult who might shed new light on my data analysis?

7. Am I giving enough time to examining the data? Am I too hasty in drawing conclusions without seeing the deeper meanings of the data?

8. Am I coming to conclusions on the basis of too little evidence? Am I finding enough support in my data for the claims I am making?

9. Am I claiming too much about the results of the changes I made? Am I suggesting that my conclusions apply beyond my classroom?

Pedagogical Design

The main objectives of the strategy training program for this project were as follows:

1. Helping the learners to learn how to use the three reading strategies (skimming, scanning, and making predictions) to foster autonomy when reading topics selected by them.

2. Helping the learners to learn how to improve reading comprehension through the use of the three reading strategies implemented in the project.

In this sense, we were facilitators by providing our learners guidance and reading strategies input to enable them to develop autonomy towards reading. The program integrated 11 sessions of two hours each, which were developed with the learners from February to May, 2012. Appendix D describes in detail the steps and processes that were followed in order to carry out the implementation of the project. The program was organized based on Williams (1996), who suggests that for the effective teaching of reading in the classroom, the lesson should be divided into three consecutive phases: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. The first phase, according to Williams, "aims to introduce and raise interest in the topic, to motivate learners by giving them a reason for reading and to provide some language preparation for the text" (p. 37). Therefore, in this phase we provided our learners with the opportunity to explore ideas, knowledge, and personal experiences regarding the readings. This stage is important to activate schemata and to prepare students for reading. The second phase, while-reading, is the most active stage. According to Williams, it enables the students to understand the writer's purpose, the text structure and to clarify text content.

In the post-reading stage, the teacher may ask the students about their reaction to the text. For example, the students may answer whether they have liked and enjoyed it, or found it useful or not. This stage is also important since it is supposed to evaluate and examine the output and feedback from the students. In addition to that, the post-reading phase enables the students, according to Williams (1996), "to consolidate or reflect upon what has been read and to relate the text to the learners' own knowledge, interest, experience or views" (p. 39).

Data Analysis and Findings

For the analysis of the data gathered during the implementation, the researchers used the grounded theory approach, which allowed them to generate, build, and interpret the findings following open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding, according to Stern and Porr (2010), "involves breaking up data into segments, and then collapsing them into one or more conceptual categories" (p. 64). Axial coding, following Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007), "is understood as the stage to link categories and codes" (p. 493). Selective coding, based on Cohen et al. (2007), is the stage to establish a core code and to clarify connections between the core codes and other codes.

After exploring the data gathered and applying the coding strategy to reduce the quantity of information collected with the instruments, two categories and three subcategories related with the research question emerged (Table 1).

Table 1. Categories and Subcategories

Category	Subcategories
Fostering Autonomy Through the Use of Reading Strategies	Decision Making for Learning and Doing Assigned Homework
	Increasing Reading Awareness
	Promoting Motivation
Improving Reading Performance	

Fostering Autonomy Through the Use of Reading Strategies

Data taken from the students' pre-implementation checklist, the three questionnaires (one questionnaire for each strategy), the post-lesson/self-evaluation report, and the students' post-implementation checklist supported the fact that most students increased their autonomy, principally by making decisions for learning and doing assigned homework, increasing awareness of the reading process, increasing motivation, and improving their reading skills by using the three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and making predictions).

Decision Making for Learning and Doing Assigned Homework

After the researchers implemented the initial questionnaires and activities, the learners started expressing their interest in learning the target language. They carried out their reading comprehension tasks using the three reading strategies proposed by the teacher and, through those tasks, learned to make decisions about their reading process autonomously. They started taking initiative in order to approach specific activities, such as finding out the meaning of unknown words, locating specific information in a text, finding main ideas in a passage, and relating the content of the reading to their own schemata. By doing this, they felt empowered to carry out their assigned homework on their own and to transfer those strategies to reading effectively in Spanish about other subjects. These features of autonomy led them to be less dependent on the teacher and more focused on their reading tasks. Excerpt 1 demonstrates the process the students followed in order to develop the three reading strategies for fostering autonomy.

Excerpt 1

Teacher:[1] Do you do your activities or tasks with responsibility, interest, and commitment? Yes or No? Why?)

Student A: Yes, because responsibility is essential to become an independent and successful learner.

Student B: Yes, because it is a responsibility which has been given to us and we must carry it out.

Student C: Yes, because it is important to do our tasks to learn more into the future.

Student F: Yes, because if we do not do the tasks, we will not learn, practice helps us to learn. (Questionnaire on scanning)

Little (1991) mentions that when defining autonomy, one must take into consideration some aspects such as the capacity learners have to work on their own, their responsibility, and their ability to make decisions for learning. After students practiced the use of the three reading strategies, they realized the usefulness of these strategies to aid in making their own decisions in their learning process, developing responsibility and commitment.

Decision making for learning and doing assigned homework was identified by the researchers as a key finding due to the fact that learners started acquiring more determination and initiative towards reading, and there was more enthusiasm when they used the strategies taught in class. As a result, they were more committed to doing their homework:

Excerpt 2

At the beginning of the reading process, learners were worried about the use of the reading strategies. After training in their use, learners felt with more initiative and open-minded for reading; they followed instructions carefully for the development of

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1   All the samples taken from the students as well as all the instruments have been translated from Spanish into English to enable full understanding of the findings of the study and for purposes of publication.

skimming strategy. Likewise, they could participate more actively in class. (Post-lesson self-evaluation report, skimming)

Increasing Reading Awareness

The second subcategory came up as another way in which learners developed their autonomy. During the process of the implementation of the three reading strategies, learners became more conscious of their reading process through the use of the strategies taught. As a result, they were more open-minded and reflective regarding how to use and apply the reading strategies to promote their autonomy. After the implementation of the strategies, all the students agreed that their process was better when using reading strategies.

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Dickinson (1995) states that autonomy is an attitude toward learning in which students are prepared to take responsibility for their learning; therefore, having this responsibility toward learning increases their awareness of their learning process. This was done through the students' training in the use of the reading strategies. Excerpt 3 demonstrates the importance given by learners to their reading process, particularly increasing awareness about the use of the reading strategies to foster autonomy.

Excerpt 3

Teacher: Do you think that the skimming strategy implemented in class is useful for you to use in other contexts? Yes or No? Why?

Student A: Yes, I have put it into practice in the other subjects, and I have seen better outcomes.

Student B: Yes, because I am more conscious about how this strategy works in other subjects.

Student D: Yes, this strategy is useful for me use in other subjects to find the correct answer.

(Questionnaire on skimming)

Promoting Motivation

Motivation was fostered with the implementation of the three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and making predictions). This was evidenced by the fact that learners read more easily and faster, and reported that they enjoyed their reading more and that they felt more motivated by going to the question first and then going to the text to find out what they needed to focus on, disregarding vocabulary and words they did not know. They clearly stated that they became more interested in reading with the use of the reading strategies. As a result, learners became more autonomous readers. The following excerpts demonstrate that motivation was promoted with the development of the reading strategies because these strategies allowed the students to enjoy the reading process.

Excerpt 4

Teacher: Do you feel motivated when you are able to locate specific information in a text in English? Yes or No? Why?

Student B: Yes, because I like to read when I understand what I read. And this situation engages me to read more.

Student C: Yes, because I have learned how to locate specific information in a text, thus, I feel more confident towards reading.

Student E: Yes, because this strategy makes reading more interesting, and it helps me to read more.

Student F: Yes, because this strategy makes me feel more comfortable to read.

(Questionnaire on scanning)

Excerpt 5

Learners felt comfortable in reading because the reading strategies developed in class allowed them to read easier, faster and more enjoyable. Furthermore, they were able to transfer these strategies to use them in other subjects. (Post-lesson self-evaluation report, making predictions)

These findings are similar to the ones reported by Aguirre and Ramos (2009) after conducting five workshops on reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and predicting in a semi-distance learning program. The authors found that the use of reading strategies had contributed

to the reading process of students. The students' attitude and motivation towards English changed. Through the teacher's guidance in terms of how to use reading strategies, students were able to develop metacognitive skills and, as a result, build up confidence and motivation to work by themselves on assigned tasks.

Improving Reading Performance

This category emphasizes the importance of the three reading strategies for the improvement of the reading skills. Learners were able to use and apply the reading strategies to read faster, more easily and with increased comprehension. Consequently, they were able to locate main ideas, find specific information in a text, and make predictions. The use of these strategies empowered learners as effective readers and they became less dependent on the teacher than they used to be.

The excerpt below demonstrates how learners improved their reading process when they implemented the reading strategies.

Excerpt 6

Teacher: Have you improved your reading skills after the implementation of skimming strategy? Yes or No? Why?

Student A: Yes, because I have learned several words I did not know before. And I can read faster in English now.

Student C: Yes, reading has become easier by using skimming.

Student D: Yes, because I have a better picture of the text now.

Student E: Yes, because I can understand the main idea of the reading.

(Questionnaire on skimming)

Finally, and to support the fact that learners progressed in their reading skills, a reading achievement-test was applied at the end of the process which confirmed the success of the three reading strategies (scanning, skimming, and making predictions).

Conclusions

The use of the three reading strategies (skimming, scanning, and making predictions) is a very enriching process to guide learners along the path of autonomy, particularly in terms of decision making for learning and doing assigned homework, increasing awareness of their own reading learning process, and promoting motivation. Also, these strategies encouraged students to see that they were builders of their own knowledge and possibilities. Through this process, learners were more open-minded and reflective regarding how to use and apply the reading strategies for effective reading and to promote their autonomy.

In addition, the effective use of reading strategies made learners feel more motivated while reading. This motivation was due to the fact that learners read more easily and faster, and reported that they enjoyed their reading because the topics had been selected by them. Also, they were able to locate specific information, identify general information, and make predictions about a text without depending a lot on the teacher.

Finally, there was improvement of their reading skills due to the efficient use of the reading strategies.

Pedagogical Implications

The conclusions mentioned above led to the identification of various issues teachers should take into consideration when teaching English, especially when teaching reading strategies to EFL learners.

First, in many EFL classrooms translation is still used as a method, and little or no attention is given to training in reading strategies for an effective and meaningful reading process. Through the application of the reading strategies (skimming, scanning, and making predictions) learners could not only improve reading comprehension, but also develop

some features of autonomy such as metacognitive skills, reading awareness, motivation, and decision making. The guidance in terms of how to use reading strategies helps learners to achieve a better performance as well as to enjoy the learning process due to the fact that they become more efficient and have more fun. Furthermore, other language skills (listening, speaking, and writing) might be improved through the implementation of the reading strategies.

Secondly, reading strategies should be taught explicitly in order for learners to understand them and put them into practice in other contexts. For example, learners could use scanning to locate specific information in a biology text or use skimming to identify the main idea in a Spanish passage.

In addition, readings must be selected taking into consideration the learners' interests, age, English level, needs, and context allowing them to select the reading topics they want to read for the term. By doing this, learners will see English reading as a tool to access real life situations concerning their context and will be engaged in the English learning process. Moreover, motivation will make them more successful because it will encourage them to accept responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, teachers should take into consideration the importance of promoting motivation in the reading process in order for learners to perceive their progress and reach their goals.

Teachers are also encouraged to implement the stages of reading proposed by Williams (1996) for effective reading (pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading) since they are helpful to scaffold the reading process in a sequential and effective way (see Pedagogical Design).

Suggestions for Further Research

It is suggested that similar studies be conducted with other types of reading strategies such as inferring or extensive reading. It would also be interesting to study how learners acquire language structures and vocabulary through reading activities. Likewise, it would be interesting to implement these reading strategies in a virtual learning environment to identify if learners take advantage of them to improve their reading comprehension.

Moreover, this study could also be replicated with larger groups of participants to explore the variety of their insights and see if students would also be willing to develop better reading skills, autonomy, and commitment to carry out their homework as well as to foster different types of interaction and awareness regarding their reading process. Finally, we would like to highlight the importance of using the list of "checkpoints" proposed by Burns (2010). By doing this, we kept an eye on the evolvement of our research project due to the fact that it allowed us to be focused, objective, reflective, and well documented. Also, it was useful for us in evaluating our research project and making adjustments based on the findings to reach trustworthy conclusions.

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Appendix A: Pre-Implementation Checklist

Name:
Date:
Please answer the following questions.
Students' opinions

Self-Assessment Checklist	Never	Sometimes	Many times	Always
1. Do you read in English?				
2. Can you identify specific information in a text?				
3. Can you understand the main idea in a text?				
4. Can you make predictions about a text or reading through a picture or the title?				
5. Do you think that scanning is a useful strategy?				
6. Do you think that skimming is a useful strategy?				
7. Do you think that making predictions is a useful strategy?				
8. Do you do your activities or tasks with responsibility and commitment?				
9. Do you look up new vocabulary in texts to improve the reading process?				
10. Do you check and read again the assigned readings to complement what you see in class?				

Appendix B: Questionnaire on Scanning

1. Can you identify specific information in a text? Yes or No? Why?
2. Do you think that the scanning strategy implemented in class is useful for your use in other contexts? Yes or No? Why?
3. Do you feel motivated when you are able to locate specific information in a text in English? Yes or No? Why?
4. Do you think that having the option of selecting topics of your interest has promoted more autonomy to read about other subjects? Yes or No? Why?
5. Have you improved your reading skills after the implementation of the scanning strategy? Yes or No? Why?
6. Do you do your activities or tasks with responsibility, interest and commitment? Yes or No? Why?

Appendix C: Post-Implementation Checklist

Name:
Date:
Please answer the following questions.
Students' opinion

Self-Assessment Checklist	Never	Sometimes	Many times	Always
1. How often do you read outside the classroom for your own interest?				
2. Can you understand the main idea in a text?				
3. Can you identify specific information in a text?				
4. Can you make predictions about a text through a picture or the title?				
5. Do you think that scanning is a useful strategy?				
6. Do you think that skimming is a useful strategy?				
7. Do you think that making predictions is a useful strategy?				
8. Do you do your activities or tasks with responsibility and commitment?				
9. Do you look up new vocabulary in texts to improve your reading comprehension process?				
10. Do you check and read again the assigned readings to complement what you study in class?				
11. Do you monitor and self-assess your own learning process to overcome any difficulties?				
12. Do you think that the strategies implemented in class are useful for you to use in other contexts?				
13. Do you think that the use of strategies engages you to read more in English?				
14. Do you believe that the reading process is better when you use reading strategies?				

Appendix D: Strategy Training Program 2012

Sessions	Activities	Reading Topics
February 14th to 16th Session 1: Introducing the Research Project	*Introducing the project to the class.* Explaining the benefits of the project. The purpose of this session was to persuade learners about the usefulness of the three reading strategies to improve reading comprehension and develop some features of autonomy such as making decisions for learning, taking responsibility for their own learning, increasing reading awareness, and increasing motivation. We explained to the students that they were going to take three sessions of two hours each with each one of the three reading strategies (scanning, skimming and making predictions). Task would integrate the three phases of reading: pre-reading, while reading and post-reading. We taught the strategies explicitly, particularly using teacher modeling in order for learners to get used to the strategies and put them into practice.	Some samples of readings using *scanning, skimming, and making predictions* were taken to get learners conscious of how to use the three reading strategies.
February 21st and 22nd Session 2: Scanning Session 1	*Reading about everyday activities.* Learners found specific information in a passage after they got some language preparation for the text. In the pre-reading phase, they had to look at different pictures related to everyday activities and say the activities. Then, they wrote the activities on the board. In the while-reading phase, they were asked to find specific actions or activities in a short text. In the post-reading phase, they had to write the activities they did every day. Then, they were asked to discuss with the person next to them the activities they had in common and the activities that were different.	Hobbies.
March 1st to 6th Session 3: Scanning Session 2	*Reading How to make a vegetable soup.* Learners found specific information in a short story regarding How to make a vegetable soup. In the pre-reading phase, they had to talk about the common vegetable products they grew in their community and what they could do with those products. In the while-reading phase, they were asked to read a short story about a girl who was a good cook. Before reading the story they had to read some questions and then select the best option based on specific things that happened in the story.	How to make a vegetable soup.

Sessions	Activities	Reading Topics
March 8th to 13th Session 4: Last Scanning Session	Learners read about the importance of plants for life on earth. They could understand specific ideas of the passage. In the pre-reading phase, they looked at a photosynthesis chart. Then, the teacher asked them the importance of photosynthesis, the parts of the plant, and what plants produce. In the while-reading phase, they were asked first to read some statements and then they needed to go to the text as fast as they could to find out if they were true or false. After this, we shared the answers. In the post-reading phase, learners had to write two true statements and a false one about the text "green plants." Then, they read the sentences to the class in order for the others to identify the false statement.	Green plants (the process of photosynthesis).
March 15th to 20th Session 5: Skimming Session 1	Learners found the main idea of the text. In the pre-reading phase, learners described the environment of a zoo with the support of a zoo picture given by the teacher. Then, they had to list some beautiful animals and some dangerous ones found in a zoo. After this, they were asked to talk about the foods those animals usually eat. In the while-reading phase, they read the text and matched the story with its appropriate picture. Then, they talked to the class about how they organized the story. Next, they had to complete a reading map which had the following information: Title of the reading, setting, characters, main animals, foods that animals were eating. They had to do this activity individually and then share their answers with the class. In the post-reading phase, they worked in groups of three to talk about what they liked about the reading, the importance of the reading in real life as a way to protect the animals in danger of extinction, and how we as citizens should take care of those animals when we visit a zoo. Part of this post-reading task was done in Spanish because of the level of the learners. Learners used "should" and "shouldn't" to give advice about how to take care of animals when going to a zoo.	A visit to the zoo.

Sessions	Activities	Reading Topics
April 10th to 12th Session 6: Skimming Session 2	Learners looked at the text and matched the headings (A-D) with the paragraphs (1-4). Learners identified the main idea of the text. In the pre-reading phase, learners had to say the names of the animals and their characteristics. Then, they talked about the most and the least dangerous animals. In the while-reading phase, they looked at the text and matched the headings (A-D) with the paragraphs (1-4). Then, they shared their answers. In the post-reading phase, they selected an animal of their region and wrote a short description of it (type of animal, characteristics, color, foods it eats, place it lives).	Dangerous animals.
April 17th to 19th Session 7: Last Skimming Session	Learners found the main idea of a passage about different types of dairy cows. In the pre-reading phase, they mentioned the types of cows they saw in a poster. Then, they had to name the colors of these types of milk cows. After this, they were asked about these cows in their region. In the while-reading phase, they answered some questions about the text "Milk Cows." In the post-reading phase, they were asked to select one of the milk cows presented and talk about it. For example, they could talk about the origin of that type of cow, color, weight, main characteristics (small or big). They made a presentation for the class.	Different types of dairy cows.
April 24th to 26th Session 8: Making Predictions Session 1	Learners made predictions about school matters. They talked about the most relevant issues that happened in a school. In the pre-reading phase, learners predicted the topic of the text through the analysis of different pictures. Then, they read the text by chunks and made predictions of what was going to happen next. There were some tips for helping them to do a communicative task using "should" and "should not." In the while-reading phase, they needed to give advice to some people. In the post-reading phase, they were asked to discuss with a classmate some tips for staying healthy (using "should" and "should not").	School matters.

Sessions	Activities	Reading Topics
May 1st to 3rd Session 9: Making Predictions Session 2	Learners made predictions about the origin of coffee. In the pre-reading phase, they were presented with some pictures related to Colombian coffee and they talked about the importance of coffee in our country and the regions where coffee is grown. Then, they were asked to work with a partner and decide if some sentences were true or false before reading the text. In the while-reading phase, they read the text and checked if their guesses were right or wrong. In the post-reading phase, they were asked to select an agricultural product (vegetable or fruit) and talk about it emphasizing characteristics of the product e.g., origin, benefits, price, etc.	Coffee.
May 8th to 10th Session 10: Making Predictions Session 3	Learners made predictions about natural resources in our country. In the pre-reading phase, learners were asked to observe a map of Colombia. They had to identify the biggest and smallest region and talk about the most important natural resources in those regions: What people could grow in Amazonas, What agricultural products people could grow in Cauca, etc. In the while-reading phase, they selected five regions on the map and wrote five predictions about five agricultural products that people can grow in those regions. Then, they checked their predictions through reading a text. In the post-reading phase, they talked about the importance of the natural resources in our country and what should be done to protect them.	Natural resources in Colombia.
May 10th to 15th Last Session	The last reading practice consisted of giving students the opportunity to choose from three different guides: one about scanning, one about skimming, and one regarding making predictions.	Reading Strategies Workshop (Closure of the implementation).