



Literatura y Lingüística

ISSN: 0716-5811

[literaturalinguistica@ucsh.cl](mailto:literaturalinguistica@ucsh.cl)

Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez

Chile

Bustos Beck, María Loreto  
Applied Linguistics/Learning to Read in ESL  
Literatura y Lingüística, núm. 18, 2007, pp. 233-251  
Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez  
Santiago, Chile

Available in: <http://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=35201814>

- How to cite
- Complete issue
- More information about this article
- Journal's homepage in [redalyc.org](http://redalyc.org)

[redalyc.org](http://redalyc.org)

Scientific Information System

Network of Scientific Journals from Latin America, the Caribbean, Spain and Portugal

Non-profit academic project, developed under the open access initiative

# Applied Linguistics/Learning to Read in ESL

María Loreto Bustos Beck\*

## Abstract

This article is a revision of researches and works done in Reading in English as a Second language by Kenneth Goodman in the area of psycholinguistics and Françoise Grellet in the practical area of exercising reading comprehension. It also analyses the contributions made in the area of critical thinking, reading strategies, and interactive models of reading.

**Key words:** Applied Linguistics, Reading Comprehension, Comprehensive Reading, Learning strategies, Critical Thinking.

## Resumen

Este artículo hace una revisión de las investigaciones y trabajos realizados por Kenneth Goodman en el campo de la psicolingüística y Françoise Grellet en relación al área práctica del ejercicio de comprensión lectora en inglés como segunda lengua. También incorpora las contribuciones al tema hechas en el ámbito del pensamiento crítico, estrategias de lectura y modelos interactivos de lectura.

**Palabras clave:** Lingüística Aplicada, Comprensión lectora, Lectura comprensiva, Estrategias de aprendizaje, Pensamiento crítico.

---

\* Chilena. Licenciada en Lingüística, mención Lengua Inglesa Universidad de Chile. Magister en Letras mención Lingüística Aplicada PUC. Universidad Católica Silva Henríquez. lbustosbeck@gmail.com

"La lectura visual y la composición en privado fomentaron el pensamiento crítico individual, contribuyendo en última instancia al desarrollo del escepticismo y la herejía intelectual...Así pues, en la Universidad de Lovaina, fundada en 1495, donde las existencias de libros de texto eran insuficientes y faltaban bibliotecas para el préstamo, los profesores organizaron sesiones especiales de dictado a fin de que los estudiantes pudieran asistir a clase con los libros necesarios (Saenger, P. en Leer en la Universidad, Cavallo & Chartier, 1998 Historia de La Lectura en el Mundo Occidental)".

## In the Field of Applied Linguistics

Though there are various opinions in relation to the topic, Allen, J. P. (1978) mentions that linguistics may be defined as the scientific study of language based on the assumption that 'scientific' is the systematic study of certain type of data, and that in language, data and theory stand in dialectical complementation which makes it not profitable to study one without the other. Nevertheless, due to the complexity of language, any study must take into account exhaustiveness and economy with the greatest degree of objectivity so that the study can be tested. He states that objectivity is what gives to a linguistic study the status of a science.

In Corders' terms, "Applied Linguistics is concerned with the identification and analysis of a certain class of problems which arise in the setting up and carrying out of language teaching programs, and with the provision of the answers or part of the answers to them". This, according to him, requires the application of theory to a practical task, which goes beyond the principles guiding a teacher's work which needs a different type of training and experience in the persons who take these decisions at the different levels of educational systems, and which involve political, economical and social aspects.

The starting point, in order to select the appropriate theoretical framework for the description of the language involved in the task and

which leads to the application of linguistics, is what the specialist must teach. Secondly, he mentions three steps for a syllabus which defines a plan for teaching with the appropriate and systematic material, within which, techniques of applied linguistics have to do with the selection of language data and their organization and presentation in the form of teaching materials. These techniques are interrelated, for Applied Linguistics is a set of related activities mediating between the various theoretical accounts of human language and the practical activities of language teaching.

The description of the learner's mother tongue, the target language and any other language the learner already possesses are, according to Corder, the raw material for the process of establishing the content of the teaching syllabus. At this point, he considers important to mention that applied linguistics generally works with a restrictive aspect of the language, concentrated in the area which is going to be taught.

Error analysis, in his terms, is part of a Psycholinguistics research methodology, but also necessary and useful as a diagnostic activity, relevant not only to the study of a second language but as a technique which provides information that can lead the teacher to a more adequate way to teach determined aspects of language.

In order to achieve consistent and reliable results, he considers fundamental to check that our own knowledge has been properly applied, that we make the appropriate decisions which made the task relevant, and that this must be made through the entirely reliable instruments to measure specifically what is included in the syllabus.

Finally, he states that Applied Linguistics is an integrative activity which reconciles different approaches to the study of language in order to make the acquisition of knowledge and of a language a more efficient, useful and pleasant task.

At this point it can be mentioned that Applied Linguistics is the way in which theories that arise from the study of language are made concrete and effective through different programs elaborated to facilitate the students' learning of ESL.

Experience shows, and language teachers will agree, that the need of English as a second language involves other areas such as reading for studying purposes, and writing for business, among others. Teaching ESL must not be considered as a subject that can be left apart. English teachers must be concerned with the real needs of this language at university levels, and the fact that it is possible to incorporate different intellectual

strategies through teaching ESL, specifically in the field of reading. ESL in Chile must be a way of improving students learning abilities and studying capacities. It is possible to develop a program making use of different aspects of a variety of theories and, together with our students' reality conform a whole that can give light to the task of facilitating and improving their second language use as a means of achieving higher intellectual tasks such as reading for academic purposes. Apparently, there is no awareness about this possibility and reading and writing have been left aside mainly due to the influence of the audiolingual method, also stated by Carrell (1990). However, the university students who participate in reading workshop are aware of their needs and lack of training to become independent students.

## Reading Comprehension and Comprehensive Reading

At this stage, it is necessary to make the distinction between Reading Comprehension and Comprehensive Reading:

- (a) Reading Comprehension points at the student's capacities to understand the general idea of a text and in some determined cases to deepen into specific kinds of information within it.
- (b) Comprehensive Reading is the one we expect our students to carry out each time they need to study a determined text, in order to learn and hopefully internalize, and apply contents related to different subjects. It is for this type of reading that the mere comprehension of global facts or events is not enough. Thus, it is extremely important to teach our students clear strategies in order to develop the intellectual skills that will enable them to face and assess the different texts according to predetermined requirements that they, themselves must be able to detect.

Being conscious that, on the one hand, reading is an active process, that students are able to make predictions, making use of their previous knowledge (Goodman in Carrel, 1990:3) and on the other hand, that there are a series of reading strategies that facilitate students' reading task and at the same time help them develop intellectual abilities that facilitate their studies. As Grellet states in relation to the level of difficulty of the different exercises present in her book: "The level of difficulty of the texts is unimportant here: the exercise-types suggested can be adapted for elementary, intermediate or advanced levels. What is important is the degree of complexity of the tasks the students are

asked to perform in relation to the text.” (Grellet, *Developing Reading Skills*, 1991:2).

In the introduction to the book *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading* (Carrel et. Al, 1990) it is mentioned that the ability to read with good comprehension, at advanced proficiency levels in a second language, has been acknowledged to be as important as oral skills (Eskey 1979 in Carrell 1990).

Formerly, theoretical models considered reading in a second language as a passive and not an active, interactive process. i.e reading was considered as a bottom – up process in which decoding was the first step to reconstruct the author’s intention through printed letters and words. That is to say, reading started from the smallest unit ‘bottom’ (word) to larger units ‘top’ (phrases, clauses, and intersentential linkages), this mainly to the influence of the audiolingual method which prioritized listening over reading and speaking over writing.

Later on the psycholinguistic models of reading stated that it was not necessary to use all the textual cues, that the reader was able to make predictions, according to which he/she reconstructs meaning from written language and may confirm it by relating his/her predictions to past experiences and knowledge of the language.

Carrell states that, “Although Goodman did not characterize his theory as top - down model, and continues to resist this characterization himself (Goodman 1981), several other reading experts (Anderson 1978; Cziko 1978) have recently characterized it basically as a concept – driven, top – down pattern in which ‘higher level processes interact with, and direct the flow of information through, lower - level processes’ (Stanovich 1980:34). In any event, the impact that Goodman’s psycholinguistic theory had on both first or native language reading, and later on, on second or foreign language reading, was to make the reader an active participant in the reading process, making and confirming predictions, primarily from his or her background knowledge of the various linguistic levels (graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic) in the broadest sense of these terms (Carrell, 1990:3)”.

The audiolingual method did not fulfil the need of a comprehensive type of reading, neither it produced automatically a reading competency which made it clear that reading could not be considered or used as an adjunct to the teaching of oral skills (Eskey 1973; Saville – Troike 1973 in Carrell, 1990).

Further research based on different models, focuses reading as an

interactive process (Samuels and Kamil, Rumelhart, Anderson and Pearson, Grabe, 1988).

Goodman's model (1988:11-21) introduces the idea that reading is an active process within which language and thought interact (psycholinguistic aspect) and that at the same time readers and writers interact in a social context (Sociolinguistic aspect). He defines reading as a receptive language process that starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by the writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs through the interaction of language and thought. Readers, he states, focus on constructing the meaning always seeking the most direct path to it, using strategies for reducing uncertainty, being selective about cues available and drawing deeply on prior conceptual and linguistic competence. The variability in the readers' proficiency will depend on their semantic background in relation to a given reading task.

Within the history of models of the reading process we can mention Emil Javal (1879) with his paper on eye movements. Then in 1886, James McKeen attempts to build a model of the reading process. But reality shows that it was not until the mid- 1950s and the 1960s that attempts to conceptualize knowledge and theory about the reading process appeared as explicit models.

A model has certain characteristics: (a) it can summarize the past, (b) it can help us to understand the present, and (c) it can predict the future, (Samuels and Kamil 1990:26). It is this third characteristic the one which gives strength to a model for it enables us to formulate hypotheses which can be tested.

Mackay, Barkman, and Jordan (1979: V-X), and also Saville – Troike (1979:26-35), agree in that oral – aural proficiency is not followed by high levels of reading ability. At present, reading is understood as the reading – related tasks that educated native speakers find in their environment, such as magazines, scientific texts, official documents, among others. In this sense, they consider fundamental the contribution made by Halliday and Hasan (Cohesion in English 1976) the starting point to make the distinction between grammatical cohesion and rhetorical coherence which allowed applied linguists to develop new kinds of activities in order to facilitate second language reading instruction.

They also mention psycholinguistics as the second field which provides stimulus to the ESL reading scene, focusing the attention in the processes engaged in reading and the strategies used by readers in order to extract meaning from related texts.

Coady (1979:6-12) considers Goodman's model as one which involves the interaction of the reader's conceptual abilities, his background knowledge of the text being read and what he does when processing the text. He notices that fluent readers combine strategies in different orders and amounts depending on the nature of the text, due to the fact that there are different ways of approaching each different text.

Eskey (1979) establishes the fact that for advanced students of English in universities, reading is the most important skill to master and that despite this situation they are taught as if they were beginners, no matter what the students' level is and what their real needs are. He considers that we are still under the dogma that "Language is speech", and argues that for advanced foreign students reading and writing must be considered as important as listening and speaking. In this sense he states that written materials for advanced students must not be limited or determined by the students' aural-oral abilities or needs due to the fact that at this stage the relation between writing and reading is much closer. He mentions French, V. (1973) who has noticed that a way of making a close relation reading/writing is "having students practice writing the kinds of English prose which they will need to read". He considers Goodman's Psycholinguistic model convincing but lacking answers to fundamental questions such as how a skillful reader can draw on so many different kinds of skills at once and why some readers are so much better than others at guessing right.

Smith (1970) defines the "fluent reader" as "a person who can make optimal use of the redundancy in a piece of text". Kolars (1970) notes that the skilled reader can work with vestiges of an array, with only parts of words and phrases from the page, which he uses to build the message he is constructing in his own mind.

Smith (1971 in Eskey 1979) thinks that "What will make the difference is an understanding of the reading process". This involves the construction and incorporation of reading strategies in order to be skillful.

As we do not know how successful readers cope with the reading challenge Smith (1971) states that "within limits, the best reading program at this particular time would be composed of instruction in the critical skills and plenty of practice in various kinds of reading".

In relation to the teaching and learning process, Eskey thinks we have underestimated the learner's contribution to learning to read, based on the fact that the human mind must be programmed innately, hence the job of the teacher is to activate the program. Wardhaugh (1969 in Eskey 1979) as well as Goodman (1990) coincide in that reading is not a passive



process, that it is rather a process in which a stage of decoding precedes a stage of involvement with meaning.

According to Eskey the advanced student requires an "Advanced knowledge" which functionally means managing the ability to decode the syntactical and lexical signals of English and the ability (skill) to follow a given line of argument, which Goodman subdivides into cognitive styles, and any strategies the reader has learned to employ (culture - bound) i.e. He considers that an ideal reading program must include brief but regular work on increasing reading speed, for its own sake and as a means of demonstrating the students that they can read faster with acceptable comprehension. He includes in this ideal program a genuine reading lab, a collection of graded readers in order to teach those skills that contribute to good reading, which includes linguistic skills as well as several kinds of cultural determined techniques. The two are inseparable and may be emphasized, according to him, at particular times in a particular class. Also, he considers that every good reader must master a considerable number of English words, and adds that there is only one means of acquiring control of an adequate English vocabulary, and that is reading itself.

Another important point stated by this author is the fact that if the objective of reading is to understand, the reader must have at least access to the writer's assumptions about his subject and, the larger world to which that subject forms part. He mentions that the relevant concepts depend on the cultural background of the student and on their interests and needs.

Finally, he emphasizes the ability of reading critically, weighing and judging an author's work on the basis of its merits as opposed to pre-conceptions about the author himself or the infallibility of anything in print, which he thinks must be studied at some time since the ultimate goal of reading is understanding. Eskey (1979:66-78).

Within their theoretical premises, Clarke and Silberstein (1979) state that there is no psycholinguistic method for teaching reading, although this field gave lights concerning the reading process which was considered the act of decoding information. They mention the two main contributions of psycholinguistics: first that the reader is not able to use all the information on a page but select the cues that determine the author's message, and second that there is more information contributed by the reader than by the print on the page. They mention Goodman's (1970) work as a summary of the psycholinguistic perspective of reading: "Reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's

expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses". The authors infer that reading is an active process within which mistakes and false starts are important in the way to produce correct responses. That reading involves an interaction between language and thought i.e skill in reading depends on the efficient interaction between linguistic knowledge and knowledge of the world. Finally, they mention the importance of using semantically complete readings, due to the fact that it facilitates the process. (Clarke and Silberstein 1979:48-65).

## Reading Comprehension

According to Krashen (1989) there is an evidence that positions pleasure reading as a powerful effect for language acquisition. For this sake it is necessary to provide beginning students with interesting and comprehensible texts i.e they need to capture students' attention. In this way, he states 'the necessary rules the student is ready to acquire will automatically be provided'. This due to the fact that generally texts attempt to teach new vocabulary and grammar ensuring low comprehensibility. It is necessary then, to take into account that training long-term memory interferes with comprehension (Smith, 1978 in Krashen, 1989: 20).

Also he mentions pedagogical materials are generally short and that good readers depend on subsequent text to check their comprehension.

Krashen (1989) mentions the hypothesis that reading exposure has a strong effect on the development of language abilities, and adds that it is a great help in language development, reading comprehension, writing style and more sophisticated vocabulary and grammar.

Sustained silent reading (SSR), as part of language arts programmes, proved to be effective in improving reading comprehension among fourth graders, when they discussed and shared books. In fact ten out of twelve studies proved that SSR is as good or better than regular programs for increasing language skills.

Nunan (1989) suggests to bear in mind that reading is not an invariant skill, that there are different types of reading skills which correspond to the many different purposes we have for reading.

Francoise Grellet (1981) states that reading comprehension means extracting the required information from a written text as efficiently as possible, rejecting irrelevant information and finding what we are looking

for, quickly. She establishes that there are two main reasons for us to read: For pleasure and for information.

She explains that a given exercise uses a certain type of question, with a certain function to develop a particular reading skill. Thus, it is better, for the purposes of reading comprehension, to consider longer units such as paragraphs or the whole text. This due to the fact that working with a text as if it was a series of independent units would only lead students to feel the need of understanding every single sentence, which is not necessary in order to fulfill the purpose of understanding the text and to be reluctant to infer meanings of sentences from what comes before or after them.

As she suggests, 'reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more importa that it is important as well, to start with more global tasks related to the text and move towards detailed understanding.nt that what one finds in it. This is why from the very beginning, the students should be taught to use what they know to understand unknown elements, whether these are ideas or simple words. This is best achieved through a global approach of the text'.

Reading comprehension should not be separated from the other skills. On the contrary, according to the author, it is important to link the different skills through reading activities.

The author states that reading is an active skill because it involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions. In relation to this she mentions that one should introduce exercises in which there is no straightforward answer in order to encourage students to make judgments and appreciations to lead to discussions and reflections of the text.

Grellet also establishes that it is important to consider reading as a communicative function. Exercises must therefore be meaningful and correspond as much as possible to what one is expected to do with the text.

Another point mentioned by her is the fact that exercises should be flexible and varied. The aim of the exercise, she says, must be clearly defined and a clear distinction must be made between teaching and testing. Testing, explains the author, involves accuracy-type exercises whereas teaching develop different skills.

She establishes that students must be taught how to approach and consider the text in order to become independent and efficient readers, considering that each reader brings his own meaning to the text he reads

based in what he expects from the text and his previous knowledge.

In relation to reading comprehension in the classroom the author explains that there must be a variety of exercises in order to motivate students, especially if there are different skills to be covered.

It is important, she continues, to let the text suggest what exercises are more appropriate to it. The text must be the starting point for determining why one would normally read it, how it would be read, how it might relate to other information before thinking of a particular exercise.

She states that: "Many texts are meant to be read and enjoyed, that too many exercises might spoil the pleasure of reading. A balance should be struck between leaving the students without any help on the one hand and on the other hand 'squeezing the text dry'.

Silent reading does not mean that it can only be exercised individually. On the contrary, she states that it is particularly interesting to compare, interpret and share information about the text with other students. "All will lead to a discussion and probably a need to refer back to the text to check".

Concerning reading techniques, the author comments that most of the students know intuitively some of the techniques concerning sensitizing, but that it is necessary for them to be re-trained as it is more difficult for them to do the same in a second language.

Improving reading speed is basic, as the author explains, for students who read slowly, in order not to get discouraged. She explains they also tend to stumble on unfamiliar words and fail to grasp the general meaning of the passage.

Timing themselves is a good technique, or taking the length of the text and reading time, into account, keeping records of their results.

Reading, states Grellet, 'should also be followed by comprehension questions or activities, since reading speed should not be developed at the expense of comprehension', for there is no one type of reading

The author states that there is no one type of reading but several according to one's reasons for reading.

She points out that it is a waste of time to read all texts in the same way, due to the fact that in many of the cases, the students would be absorbing irrelevant information (non-essential).

The exercises presented in this section are thought as a way of making students more confident and efficient readers.

The author defines predicting as 'the faculty of predicting or guessing what comes next, making use of grammatical, logical and cultural clues. She states that this skill is at the core of the techniques such as anticipation and skimming. A good exercise, he points out, is giving students unfinished passages to complete.

Previewing involves using the table of contents, the appendix, the preface, the chapter and paragraph headings in order to find out where the required information is likely to be.

The exercises suggested here attempt to put students in situations they can apply this technique, naturally.

Being motivated means that we start reading the text ready prepared to find a number of things, expecting to answer some questions and specific information. These expectations are inherent to the process which is a permanent interrelationship between the reader and the text. When reading we make predictions which are to be confirmed or corrected, she argues i.e. we anticipate ourselves to what the text is going to give us.

Grellet suggests asking the students to choose the topics they wish to read, although when it is a large group of students it is not easy to come to an agreement in the subject and the teacher may also want to introduce new topics.

In order to work out a text, Grellet suggests the following steps:

### (1) Function of the text

Comprehension of a passage is obvious if we know what its function is. Hence, students should find what the text aims at (convincing the reader, giving him information, among others).

### (2) Organization of the text

The function and certain information to be conveyed. There are many ways of presenting this information, says the author. The organization of a passage, she states, will not always be determined by its contents and the nature of the information that must be conveyed.

Once students recognize the pattern that is being used, 'they can apply their reading strategies to the text and predict what is likely to follow'.

Exercises should lead students to study the way ideas are organized in the text, in order to make them think of it. Using visual representations such as diagrams, tables, among others, encourage students to use such devices when taking notes on what they read.

The author points out that understanding the way in which the text is organized is understanding its contents (Thematization). Therefore is good after these types of exercises to make the students answer questions which are not easy, nor simple to answer.

The other exercises suggested by her, the Question-types, follow two different aims:

- (a) To make the students active in the reading process by presenting them with question-making activities (drawing a diagram, completing a table, etc.)
- (b) To devise activities which are as natural as possible (answering a letter using the information given in a letter, completing a document, etc.)

Grellet states that throughout summary writing many details must be rejected but, it is written in ones' own words, it does not imply outlining the structure of the passage, as note-taking usually does, it should be an accurate and objective account of the text, leaving out our reactions to it.

According to the author assessing the text is a vital aspect of reading comprehension and an ability, together with the possibility of assessing it. To do it one should be really aware of the writer's intention, his point of view and possible bias.

## Reading as an Interactive process

According to Widdowson (1979 in Carrel, et al 1990 : 56), reading is a process by which we combine textual information with the reader's knowledge of the world. i.e. it is a kind of dialogue between the reader and the text. Goodman (1970, 1976) and Smith (1982) states that we sample the text in order to confirm hypotheses and form new hypotheses.

In the case of ESL readers, Carrel states questions on how and to what degree literate second language readers employ lower-level processing strategies, and how these skills interact with higher-level (top-down) strategies.

Another problem is to what extent a model of the fluent reader adequately characterizes second language readers.

"The language ability of most children at age 6 is already developed. They have attained sophisticated control over their syntax, they possess a vocabulary of about 5000 words, and they have a phonological system that can adequately communicate their needs (Singer 1981 in Carrel, 1990: 58). This cannot be assumed for students learning to read English. The issue, states Grabe, is not the relation of the reader to the text but the processing relations among various component skills in reading.

As van Dijk and Kintsch (notes, 1983) mention, "What is really wrong with poor readers is that they recognize isolated words inaccurately and too slowly, and compensate for their lack in decoding skills with context-dependent guessing hypothesis testing..."

Basso, et al (1984:58) notes the importance of an identifiable organizational structure as well as of the activation of previous world knowledge for the comprehension and memory of narrative discourse. Thus, they state that "schema activating texts are powerful materials for the stimulation of linguistic creativity".

This idea coincides to some extent with the recent research done by Biber (1984, 1985, 1986 in press) and Grabe (1984, 1986b) which indicates that 'the linguistic elements of texts combine interactively to help create the textuality i.e. what makes a text be a text as opposed to a collection of isolated sentences that must be processed by the reader.

Other researchers suggest that writers purposefully use and manipulate different combinations of linguistic variables in different text types and genres (textual interaction). This is called by Grabe as the interaction of linguistic forms to define the functions. Hence, the readers must be able to recognize these textual parameters as part of their comprehension abilities.

According to the author it would be reasonable that certain linguistic structures and vocabulary be taught in combination with what may co-occur in the text rather than teaching structures and vocabulary derived from the text.

He states that another important implication for ESL reading research is that the development of reading abilities may be profitable in terms of stages of skills development.

## Importance of Critical Thinking

'Critical Thinking is simply the art of ensuring that you use the best thinking you are capable of under determined circumstances and given your present limited knowledge and skill' (Critical Thinking: Basic Theory & Instructional Structures, 1997: iv).

In relation to content, this study states that it is internalized by mind, becomes available to a mind, and becomes usable within a mind only through thinking. Therefore, when students think well while learning, they learn well. This can be well turned into reading i.e. when students think well while reading, they read well.

Another important idea established by this study is the fact that we, as teachers must help our students in the process of becoming a "critic" of their thinking in order to discover their thinking and to discover that, potentially, at least, they can make radical changes in their thinking, leaving aside their 'bad habits'. This way, our students will have more leverage on learning and a clearer perspective on what they should be striving to achieve.

Good thinking enables us to be more successful, to save time and energy, and experience more positive and fulfilling emotions. In other words, when we teach our students to think critically we give them tools to transfer their classroom learning to the real world of their everyday lives (Critical Thinking: Basic Theory & Instructional Structures, 1997: iv-vi).

Critical thinkers, it continues are inevitably critical readers, and critical readers approach a text with a view of entering a silent dialogue with the author. They are able to reconstruct the meaning of what they read; to question implications and presuppositions; to organize details around the main idea; to interpret and recognise interpretations, and to synthesize i.e they fit their new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought, familiarizing themselves with the different uses of language.

Rozakis has made a valuable contribution with her book 'Critical Thinking' (1991). She states that nowadays students will inherit a complex and changing world within which they will be expected to absorb ideas, examine and interpret information and be able to apply their knowledge in order to solve unconventional problems. To fulfill this purpose effectively it is necessary to 'develop systematic ways of thinking and reasoning. In other words, students need to think about their thought.

It is necessary to train students' minds to organize their way of thinking, and for this purpose it is necessary to start the other way round



i.e. not using contents as something that must be learned, but as a tool to learn strategies in order to develop the abilities and skills that will be useful in all our student's future fields.

## Learning Strategies

Strategies are optimal means for exploiting available information. They are used by individuals as a cognitive resource to achieve different tasks.

Psychological studies have contributed to place learning strategies within an information-processing theoretical model, which contains:

- (a) metacognitive strategies involving thinking about the learning process, planning for learning, monitoring comprehension or production; and
- (b) cognitive strategies that are directly related to individual learning tasks. They entail direct manipulation or transformation of learning materials; and social – affective strategies consisting of cooperative learning i.e. peer interaction to achieve common goals in learning.

On the other hand, several research have given support to state that there are textual structures which underlie the sentence level and that such organizational structures provide the means for determining the purpose of the text and the main ideas (Martin 1989, Meyer 1987, Slater and Graves 1989).

It has also been demonstrated, that text awareness has strong impact in reading comprehension, due to the fact that features of the text structure, together, contribute to the coherence of the text i.e. the text, itself, organizes and signals information in ways that create and enhance text coherence, which consistently supports reading comprehension.

Therefore, any sort of systematic attention to clues that reveal how authors attempt to relate the ideas to one another, or any sort of systematic attempt to impose structure upon text, specially in some sort of visual re-representation of the relationship among key ideas, facilitates comprehension, as it is established by Pearson and Fielding (1991).

On the other hand, Mohan (1986, 1990) argues that all texts consistently make use of five basic patterns of organization: classification, evaluation, description, sequence, and choice. These, are combined in different ways. He states that once students are made aware of the fact

that texts are composed under these patterns, they are able to locate the main ideas and distinguish them from supporting details and irrelevant information, for they also show the author's intention and the purpose of the text.

Other important concepts to define are tasks, which must be conceived as a concept that structures an experience. That is to say, metacognitive processes that allows to structure goals.

It is precisely, over the basis of a task that it is necessary to select the appropriate means to achieve this goal. It is through tasks, that it is possible to direct and control, in some way, what is going to happen. They must operate based upon three elements: (a) a goal, (b) conditions and (c) resources

Concerning materials it is necessary to mention Grellet (1981: 8), who suggests it is better to use authentic materials i.e nothing is changed from the text, also its presentation and layout is retained, whenever possible. It is then, when time comes to train primary students for specific purposes creating specially graded material through which they can develop the determined skills under constant training. Besides, this material must be attractive to them.

The learning process may be considered incidental for it is not only through language that students learn language.

It must be considered also, that learning a language is not systematic. What we do, in fact, is to systematize knowledge so as to take the best advantage from it during the process (Condemarin, et al 1995: 7-10)

## Conclusion

There exists a direct relation with the premise that states reading as an active skill (Grellet, 1991:8) and as an active mental process (Goodman in Carrel, 1991:8) within which the reader is able to apply and develop different intellectual capacities such as, finding the main idea of a text, inferring, analyzing, drawing conclusions, distinguishing facts from non-facts, predicting, visualizing, among others.

The fundamental aspects to be considered in order to help students improve their reading and learning, exploiting and maximizing their intellectual capacities in within the task of Comprehensive Reading are: establishing the difference between reading comprehension and comprehensive reading, making use of their previous knowledge, respecting

their intellectual styles, systematizing the incorporation of reading strategies, and applying them continuously.

## Bibliography

- Allen, J.P.B. (1978, vol II, ch. 2: 16- 44). *Some Basic Concepts in Linguistics*. Allen, J.P.B. & Corder, S.P. Papers in Applied Linguistics. The Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics. Oxford University Press.
- Araya, R. (1995) *Construcción Visual de Conocimientos con Juegos Cooperativos*. AutoMind Educación, Santiago-Chile.
- Basso, et al (1984) *Schema Theory in the Cognitive Processing of Written Discourse*. Tesis para optar al grado de Licenciado en Lingüística con mención en Lengua Inglesa, Universidad de Chile.
- Carrel, P. et al (1990) *Interactive Approaches to Second Language Reading*. Cambridge University Press.
- Clark, J. L. (1987) *Curriculum Renewal in School Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford University Press.
- CLAS (1997) *Campus Learning Assistance Services. Top Ten Reading Strategies. Workshop*. University of California. Santa Barbara.
- Condemarín, M. (1995) *Taller de Lenguaje*. Editorial Dolmen, Santiago, Chile.
- Corder, P. (1978, vol II, ch. 2: 1-15). *Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching*. J.P.B. Allen & S. P Corder Papers in Applied Linguistics. The Edinburgh Course in Applied Linguistics. Oxford University Press.
- Critical Thinking Community (1997). *Critical Thinking: Basic Theory & Instructional Structures*. Sonoma State University, California.
- Grellet, F. (1981) *Developing Reading Skills*. Cambridge University Press.
- Chamot et al (1997) *ESL, Language Development Activity Book, Accelerating English Language Learning*, ScottForesman, United States.

- Hutchinson, T. & Waters, A. (1987). *English for Specific Purposes /learning-centred approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Krashen, S. (1989)            *Language Acquisition and Language Education*.  
Prentice Hall International.
- Mackay, R., Barkman, B., Jordan, R. (1979). *Reading In A Second Language. Hypotheses. Organization and Practice*. Newbury House Publishers, Inc. Rowley, Massachusetts.
- Nunan, D. (1989)            *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*. Cambridge Language Teaching Library, Cambridge University Press.
- Rozakis, L. (1991)            *Reproducibles, Activities And Ideas To Develop Critical Thinking For the Middle and Upper Grades*. Scholastic, Professional Books, New York.
- Silver Burdett & Ginn (1991) *Skills Practice and Workbook*. Sterling Edition. U.S.A.