

A Socio-Culturally Based Didactic Strategy to Improve Students' Reading Skills

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Abstract

To design a Socio-Culturally based didactic strategy to improve students' reading skills, a mixed investigation of a descriptive scope was carried out in the year 2020. The population of the study was formed by a hundred English teachers from different schools in Esmeraldas, and the sample consisted of 28 of them, who were chosen at random. The methods of investigation used were Analysis, Synthesis, Hermeneutics, and the techniques used were a survey and a documentary review. The results revealed that the main difficulties concerning reading skills students present are the insufficient critical thinking and low analysis about the reading content; most of the students develop reading comprehension identifying main ideas; the principal reading strategies used by teachers in class occasionally involve social interaction, they mainly develop individual activities. Based on the diagnosis made, a Socio-Culturally Based didactic strategy was designed, with three stages: Preparatory Socio-Interactional Reading, which consists of getting the students be prepared before the reading process start, by means of socio-interactive activities; Socio-Interactional Reading, which deals with creating an interactive environment where the students can interchange ideas about the reading content, and Post Socio-Interactional Reading, which focuses on doing activities where the students can apply what they have learned.

Keywords: Didactic Strategy, Reading Comprehension, Socio-Cultural Approach

Introduction

Learning to read is a fundamental part of basic education because reading is an important skill that leads the reader to develop other disciplines. The English language is important because it allows to comprehend, to analyze, and communicate with English speakers, besides to know other cultures, which may be possible not only traveling but reading, watching movies, and listening to the radio in English. Reading is a skill that is critical in the educational success of all individuals, without adequate reading comprehension skills, students can have problems in many areas of the education.

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill needed for all areas of school and university, in the area of science, research indicates that many students lack prior knowledge and reading strategies to generate inferences; so, the students comprehend science texts poorly. It was also found that students lack the specific reading strategies to generate inferences that aid in the understanding of science texts (Best, Rowe, Ozura, and McNamara, 2005).

In the English language teaching-learning process, there are some difficulties for the development of skills needed to get a good English level, especially, when students are non-native speakers. This difficulty appears in major intensity in the Reading skill, because the reading process is not systematic; besides, teachers mainly concentrate on teaching grammar and at certain times they make use of videos or recordings to entertain students.

When it is time to practice reading, students have problems, some do not like it, others do not know how to do it, and the other part does it in a very extensive way. All this arises because this skill is not developed in school, besides, they do not have reading habits at home and it is not put into practice regularly. It is important for teachers to know some strategies to develop the students' reading skills in class. These strategies should be based on a theory that promotes social interaction because in this way

students can develop reading and, at the same time, other important skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing.

The Socio-Cultural Approach is a good theory to design a didactic strategy to teach reading skills. According to Vygotsky (1978), learning occurs as a social process. He affirms “Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intra-psychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals”, (p.57).

Learning English and developing the four skills have had a complicated situation in some institutions of Esmeraldas city and it is noticeable how the students from different levels who receive the English subject have not a good domain of the language, as there have not been a correct development of the reading skill in the teaching-learning process. The teacher’s techniques and strategies would be new things for them to adapt to so, those are factors that should be accommodated and arranged. This is the reason why didactic strategies are tools that may help them in the teaching-learning process to make it easier and less bored.

Previous experience and research gained in the pre-professional practice in an EFL class have shown the researcher that reading is not considered as important as the other skills. Students from different institutions in Esmeraldas have little interest in learning the English language because they express that it is not necessary for them and in the environment where they live, where they live it is not used.

These students have serious difficulties in the reading skills manifested through:

- Poor vocabulary
- Lack of understanding about the reading content
- Insufficient development of their critical thinking
- Poor social interaction in class about the content of the reading texts

On the other hand, the teachers of English do not have enough didactic strategies to teach the reading skills. They just tell the students to open the reading section in the textbook they use and then they ask the students to read and answer the questions, but the students do not really know what to do.

Reading is a complex skill that requires precision and a deeper understanding of the process because through reading comprehension students not only have to understand the message but to analyze and express their ideas. The problematic arises from different factors: the teachers use textbooks to teach students, those materials are often interesting in grammar, but without appropriate reading texts and correct methodologies to carry out this process, presented in a monotonous way, so the students feel bored. Considering all those negative factors, it is necessary to design a strategy for teachers to teach reading to increase the students’ interest and make the teaching learning-process better.

Because of the problem focused on students’ reading skills and teachers’ lack of adequate strategies to teach them, this researcher considered the following question:

What Socio-Culturally based Didactic-Strategy may improve the students’ reading skills?

The main objective of this investigation was to design a Socio-Culturally based didactic strategy to improve students’ reading skills, and the specific objectives were to diagnose students’ main difficulties concerning reading skills, to identify English language teachers’ main teaching reading strategies, to determine students’ main reading strategies, and to distinguish strategic actions to teach reading based on the Socio- Cultural Approach to language teaching.

What is Reading?

Today, learning English as a foreign language requires to present and to practice four different skills in the teaching-learning process in basic education, those skills are: listening, speaking, reading and writing. The reading skill is one of those four language skills; but, what is reading? Falk-Ross (2015) states: “reading is a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning” (p.61). This means that reading is a process where the reader must interpret the written message, and this is done through an interaction with the text.

Reading is making the comprehension of the paragraph, ideas, or text that is being read, this is a process of recognizing words called understanding. On the other hand, creating meaning of the reading is automatic and accurate, it is a process called fluency. In addition, reading is a complicated cognitive development of decoding symbols to construct or derive meaning from this process called reading comprehension. It is language acquisition, communication and sharing of information and ideas.

According to Fernandez (2011), “Reading is an avenue by which we accumulate knowledge to enrich and better our lives and the lives of others. Every great nation was built using the medium of reading as a pillar or building block to become a society transformed to face challenges” (p.8).

However, today’s youth especially, who will be the leaders of tomorrow, must constantly strive to fill their minds with wisdom, knowledge, and a perceptive understanding of life through reading. According to the definitions given, the researcher of this project considers that reading is a complex process in which the reader recognizes written words from a book, magazine, texts, or articles, and uses his brain to understand them, to give a meaning from print.

Types of Reading

Extensive reading

Kerr (2010) said, “Extensive reading is reading as much as possible, for your own pleasure, at a difficulty level at which you can read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translating to English as you go” (p.2). To agree with Kerr’s point of view, extensive reading is reading without limits and doing it for pleasure, trying to make it easy and according to the level of the student, also this type of reading gives students the opportunity to read longer texts, to read many simpler books that are at or slightly below the level at which you read fluently. According to Liana’s Extensive Reading Journals (2011), it is “reading as much as possible, for your own pleasure, at a difficulty level at which you can read smoothly and quickly without looking up words or translating to English as you go” (p.10).

Extensive reading has a fundamental role in the teaching learning-process of a foreign language, for example it motivates learners to read, it motivates learners to read, help and build confidence with extended texts, increases knowledge of vocabulary, and facilitates the development of prediction skills.

Intensive Reading

Intensive reading refers to a high degree of comprehension and retention over a long period of time, it is reading in depth to comprehend a text for instance; studying it sentence by sentence, using the dictionary, analyzing, translating, and retaining every expression that it contains.

About intensive reading, Scrivener (1994) stated, “the readers carefully and closely read a short text with the intention of gaining an understanding of as much as detail as possible” (p.16). This means that the student focuses on the language more than the text, the readers read in the text, focusing on the new vocabulary, grammatical forms and the problems of the text. The purpose of intensive reading is to have a detailed meaning of each part of the text, developing vocabulary and grammar knowledge and regularly this is practiced in the course, while extensive reading is out of the course.

In this type of reading the students may be doing other activities given and guided by the teacher in the classroom, for example: answering comprehension questions, choosing vocabulary, and learning grammar. It is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance. It provides a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms.

Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is the process where meaning is extracted and constructed simultaneously through interaction and participation with written language. Reading comprehension does not simply know what words you have read, it is the ability to look at what these words say and to figure out what they mean. A good reading is related to a good interaction and interpretation of the written text, also intervenes the aims of the reader and the purpose or reading; the knowledge and experience of the reader are also of great importance in this process. Reading comprehension includes three important elements: The reader-learner who is doing the comprehending, the written text that is to be comprehended, and the activity in which comprehension is a fundamental part. Pearson (2001), Alexander and Jetton (2000) identify "reader (learner), text, and context as key dimensions, without including activity as a separate dimension at the same level of analysis" (p.11).

The reader or student is considered as the person who includes all abilities, skills, knowledge, and experiences in the act of reading, the text is widely interpreted to include any printed text or electronic text and the activity, the purposes, processes and consequences associated with the act of reading are incorporated. The readers' capacity, the available and valued textbooks, and the activities in which the readers engage are related and, in some cases, determined by the sociocultural context. The sociocultural context mediates the students' experiences, as well as the students' experiences influence the context.

The Reader

The word reader defines a person who reads silently or loudly, for himself or for others. Also, the reader must have a wide range of skills and abilities to understand a text. These include cognitive abilities (attention, memory, analytical capacity, and visualization ability), motivation (a purpose to read, interest in the content being read, self-efficacy as a reader) and various types of knowledge (vocabulary, mastery and subject knowledge, linguistic and speech knowledge, knowledge of specific comprehension strategies); but what does a good reader do? A good reader resets the meaning of a text for relating the different informative clues it contains and the knowledge that the reader has. Reading is a strategic process to collect information; a good reader makes a sustained, deep, critical, analytical, and complex reading. Generally, the reader includes biological and psychological factors that affect the process of reading. The reader develops thinking processes that are important for understanding the meaning of the text. These are the factors implied by the reader's side. So, in the text and specific situation in which the reading process takes place, the reader brings characteristics that are used to carry out the process (Butcher & Kintsch, 2003; Fletcher, 1994; Narvaez, 2002).

The Text

The features of the text have a large effect on comprehension. English reading comprehension does not occur solely extracting meaning from text, but analyzing each phrase and sentences, during reading, the reader constructs different representations of the text that are important for comprehension; the texts can be difficult or easy, depending on the implicit and explicit factors that the text contains, the relationship between the text, knowledge and the skills of the reader. For a set of sentences or phrases to be considered as a text, a series of semantic and grammatical relationships is necessary so that the recipient can interpret it naturally and without difficulties. Martin (2008) describes a text or a genre as "a staged, purposeful, social activity that we engage in as speakers of a language" (p.6).

In other words, a text is a set of sentences narrowly structured, created by an issuer with the objective of a communicative intention in a given context.

The Activity

Reading must always be with a purpose, to achieve some goal. The activity refers to this dimension of reading. A reading activity involves one or more purposes, some procedures for processing the text and the consequences of performing the activity. The purpose of reading activities in English is related to different aspects, one of those is the motivational ones, which include interest and prior knowledge on the part of the reader. When the purpose is an external mandate, given as instruction by the teacher in most cases, the student must accept the purpose and complete the activity; for example, if the task is to "read a paragraph to write a summary" when the student starts doing that activity, he will perform different operations to achieve the objective.

Finally, it is important to express that the consequences of reading are part of the activity. Many reading activities in English lead to an increase in the knowledge that a reader or a student has.

The Importance of Reading

Reading is important because it develops the mind. The mind is a muscle, it needs exercises. Understanding the written words is one way the mind grows in its ability (Davis, 2016). A person who reads will have many opportunities in life, in any field; personal, social or labor. Teaching children to read in English helps them develop their language skills, also helps them to listen in a better way. Reading is very important, especially if the students make this practice for pleasure and in an intensive way; reading for pleasure makes a big difference to children's educational performance.

Finally, Bharuthram (2012) emphasizes that an inability to read texts impacts negatively on the students' ability to model their writing skill conceptually, linguistically, and structurally because of the connection between reading and writing (p.22). According to this author, reading skills are essential, not only to enrich us in the socio-cultural aspect, but to develop other skills, especially writing.

Reading Comprehension Strategies

Strategic readers are active learners who acquire strategic reading skills by themselves without being taught. They are competent of construct meaning from a text through identifying and recalling significant information, monitoring their comprehension, integrating their prior knowledge with the new information, and summarizing as well as directing their learning. Good reading comprehension is related to a good interaction and interpretation of the written text also intervenes the aims of the reader and the purpose of reading. According to Hughes (2007), there are five stages for the reading comprehension process: pre-reading, reading, responding, exploring, and applying.

In the teaching learning-process, one of the first things in learning a foreign language is that there are different reading strategies, and the students should be aware of which strategies are most suited, depending on the reading task required by the text or by their teacher. Training students to know their reading strategies and deduce when best to apply them is indeed important, especially under exam conditions when time constraints, it comes into play and decisions need to be made depending on time availability and the importance of the task at hand (McDonald, 2012). In other words, reading strategies are effective techniques that are used by English Foreign Language learners to succeed in reading comprehension. There are four important reading strategies according to McDonald (2012): predicting, skimming, scanning, and inferring.

Predicting

Magiliano (1993) established that “a prediction strategy involves thinking about what might be coming next in the text. It is applied by effective readers that mean, they used pictures, headings, and text as well as personal experience to make predictions before they begin to read”(p: 35-53). So, predicting is a type of reading strategy where the imagination is used as much as possible, in this strategy the students are thinking ahead while reading and anticipating information and events in the text.

Skimming

Skimming is the process of quickly viewing a part of the text to get general information of the author's main argument, themes, or ideas. Also, it is used to know how the passage is organized, that is, the structure of the text. Some examples of skimming can be the newspaper (quickly to get the general news of the day), magazines (quickly to find which articles you would like to read in more detail). Moreover, there are three types of skimming: preview, overview, and review.

In other words, skimming reading is like running one eye over the text, noting important information; or when the learner has some general questions in his mind.

Scanning

According to Grellet (1981), “Scanning is a reading technique that requires readers to search for specific information, without reading the whole text, through looking at its title, table of content and so on” (p.58-59). This strategy is often used when looking for specific information, with technical, scientific, or professional materials by reading something quickly such as search for key words or ideas.

Inferring

Inferring is a skill that students/learners do all day long, it is not only about reading expressions, paragraph, and body language, but about reading a text, regularly said as, “reading between the lines” where the answers are not explicitly stated.

According to Zimmermann (2009) inferences are often referred to as what you “read between the lines”. He also established that “Drawing inferences from text is a technique which requires readers to use their prior knowledge and textual information to draw conclusions, make critical judgments, and form unique interpretations from text” (p23).

Teaching Reading

Reading in English, an important element of literacy, is fundamental in today's constantly changing world since reading competence is foundational, not only for school based on learning, but also for children's behavioral and psychological wellbeing, occupational success, as well as for a country's social development. An important element for teaching reading is an integrated approach at the moment to develop the reading skill.

An integrated approach to teaching reading is a process that should involve collaboration with school communities and parents and should teach the following: Phonemic awareness: Phonics, Vocabulary, Text comprehension, Fluency: (National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy Report, 2005).

There are three important elements for successfully teaching/learning reading skills, according to Harmer (1998).

The first element is called **Engage**. This element is very important because it helps the students to get attention before starting the class. Harmer (1998) explained that, without a good engaging activity, students will become bored or unmotivated during the class.

The second element is **Study**. This element refers to the presentation or construction of knowledge; there are different styles for developing this element, one of them is that the teacher introduces the language

and explains the grammar; also the students can work individually or in groups for discovering grammar, vocabulary, etc. At this moment, in reading activities, students develop the reading task.

The last element is **Activate**. It is related to activities where the students/learners' practice what they have read and learned. This activity permits students to get involved in real language or check if they have understood what they have read. There are many activities for developing the Activate element, such as answering questions, role-playing, writing reviews, commenting with a partner, or debating in class.

The Socio-Cultural Approach

There are many factors that should be taken into consideration in the English Language teaching-learning process, especially when developing the reading skill in a school, to learn a new language, with new characteristics, happens to become a complex process; the same occurs with the different methodologies, strategies, and techniques that the teachers need for developing educational purposes; there are diverse learning theories of important and recognized pedagogists and psychologists. One of the most important theories is the Socio-Cultural Approach, by Vygotsky (1978).

This Socio-Cultural Approach is important and positively contributes to the teaching-learning process of a foreign language. Vygotsky (1978) expresses in his first investigation about the language acquisition and how it is developed in the mind, also how the language comes up in children through social interaction. In his first theories he spoke on biological facts, but he analyzed and figured out how the role of society and interaction among people influence on the human mind development. Vygotsky (1987) expressed that "Humans develop the ability to acquire meaningful speech in their interaction with others. For example, in their interactions with adults, children continually ask the names of things", (p.16).

The Zone of Proximal Development

The theory of Zone of Proximal Development refers to the mental ability students have. For this theory, a child or learner must do a simple activity (what is known), and how with the help of an instructor he can realize a more complex activity (what is not known). Vygotsky (1920) declared Zone of Proximal Development, as "the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development, as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p.238).

The Zone of Proximal Development refers to the process that a learner does to get future results in the teaching learning-process. In other words, when the students are learning, they learn by themselves, by creating their own knowledge; but it is common that some difficulties appear in classes, the students need help for reinforcing their knowledge. A teacher is the most appropriate person that can give guidance, this process when the students acquire a correct knowledge and can do complex and extensive activities is called ZPD.

Didactic Strategies

Didactics refers to the principles, phenomena, forms, precepts, and laws of teaching. Medina (2003) defines didactics as a discipline of pedagogical nature that focuses on the teaching goals and compromise with the aim of bettering human beings through the understanding and permanent change of the social communication (p.7).

A strategy is a procedure with order, formalized, and oriented to the achievement of an objective clearly established. Its application in daily practice requires the improvement of methods and techniques whose detailed choice and design are the responsibility of the teacher. But what are didactic strategies in the teaching learning-process? Vadillo and Klingler (2005) affirm that didactic strategies point to the group of developed activities considering not only students' understanding of ideas but also a mutual relationship between a specific information and a particular activity, as general norm of input. With the application of

strategies in the process of teaching English, the teacher looks for a common project. Didactic strategies would be such as the organization of the teaching learning-process structure to achieve objectives, in which students not only learn a subject but also gain knowledge of other forgotten contents as the capacity of cooperation, respect for oneself.

Calle and Lalvay (2017) present a methodology based on the scheme theory and its bottom-up and top-down processes, this methodology is suitable for teaching reading within a classroom. They express that within this methodology memory plays a very important role since it is what will allow the student to acquire new knowledge. Its objective was to detect the interests that students have in reading and, above all, the methodology used by the teacher in the development of this skill. However, for the results to be successful, a didactic guide for the teacher was developed including activities with the purpose of facilitating a teaching methodology that can help in the process of reading skills.

Madariaga and Martinez (2010) considering that reading comprehension is the basis for meaningful reading, developed a direct instruction program of comprehension strategies and reading meta-comprehension in a school in Spain. Meetings were held with the teachers of the sample in which the program was applied, in order to instruct in its application, 457 students participated, and the results confirm the hypothesis of a significant improvement in reading comprehension in English. The objective was to achieve an application of simpler and more natural strategies in the classroom and create awareness for their daily use. These strategies were: read the text three times, use their prior knowledge, and finally make a short summary of maximum three lines.

Davies (2000) centered on the study of reading processes. He created and studied the English reading process in Birmingham University. His objective was to propose the potential of the gender-based syllabus in which writing skill is integrated with reading skill and which involves students in developing awareness of both top-down and bottom-up strategies. The mentioned author established that reading skill without making a process is not reading. The teachers must teach in schools how to develop reading skills because this process not only involves the speech, also the imagination and cognition; the reading process must be done according to the level of the study and the student's age.

Gracia (2021) investigated the reading process in Esmeraldas; she analyzed didactic strategies to improve reading comprehension skills in the process of teaching and learning English; this author refers to the fact that students read when the teacher ordered them, indicating that there was inadequate motivation to read in English. In addition, there was little evidence that students liked to read aloud.

Method

The current investigation took place in Esmeraldas city, with the teachers of different English Language areas. The investigation was done with a quantitative method and a qualitative one. It was qualitative because the researcher was involved in the problem that is being developed, to have clear each aspect that was important to know. The population was formed by twenty-eight English teachers in total from different schools in Esmeraldas. Furthermore, the methods of this investigation were analysis, synthesis, and hermeneutics. Analysis and Synthesis were used for analyzing the bibliography and synthesizing the most important reasons that may support this investigation. Hermeneutics was very meaningful to interpret the most relevant information provided in the theoretical framework. Justly, it helped to interpret the results obtained with the application of the techniques. Moreover, some techniques were applied in this investigation such as a survey and a documentary review.

The survey included six questions about the reading strategies used by English Teachers. Technique of survey was carried out to analyze the procedure that teachers follow and the use they make of the Socio-Cultural Approach in the classroom with the students, also to verify how the students interact in class, what difficulties they have and which strategies teachers use to improve reading comprehension. Besides,

a documentary review was done with the objective to review the Socio-Cultural theory and previous studies.

With the results of the diagnosis made, a Socio-Culturally Based Didactic Strategy was designed to teach reading comprehension. Some stages were stated and some activities that should be carried out in each of them.

Results

Regarding the use of social interactivity that students develop when they read in English (figure 1), the results revealed that 54% of the teachers use social interaction “occasionally” for making a good reading.

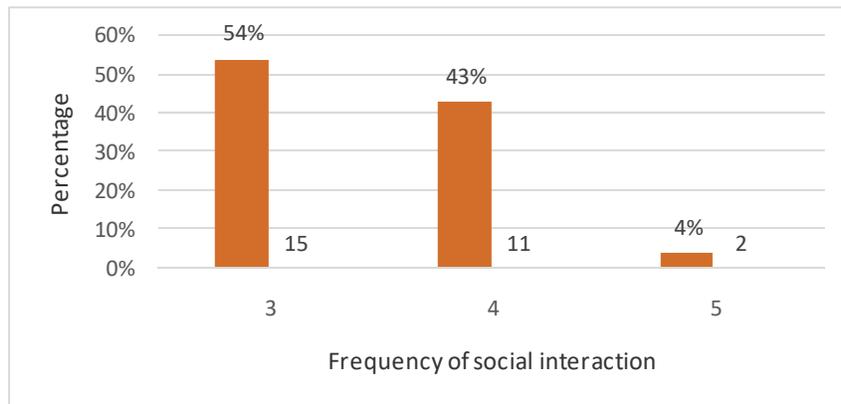


Figure 1. Use of social Interactivity.
Source. Survey applied to teachers.

In relation to the problematic when the students are reading (figure 2), it can be observed that 58% of the teachers of different schools in Esmeraldas expressed that the most frequent problematic is the insufficient critical thinking and low analysis about the reading content.

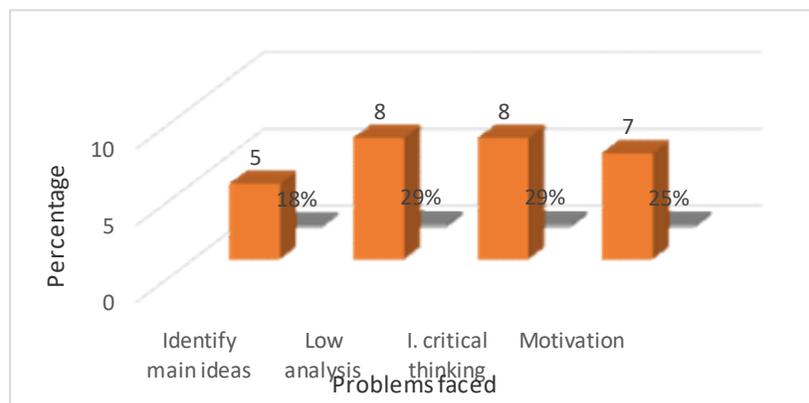


Figure 2.Frequent Problems when students are reading.
Source. Survey applied to students.

About the stages for developing a good reading process, (figure 3) it is revealed that 68% of the teachers know the stages/phases for developing a reading process.

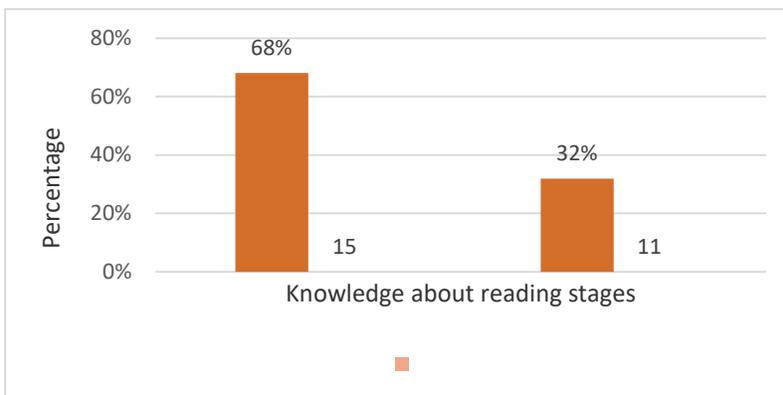


Figure 3. Stages/phases for the reading process.
Source. Survey applied to teachers.

Referring to how students develop reading comprehension (figure 4), it is shown that 29% affirms that students develop reading comprehension identifying main ideas, 25% doing exercises, 25% using textbooks, 25% using reasoning, and 14% using decoding.

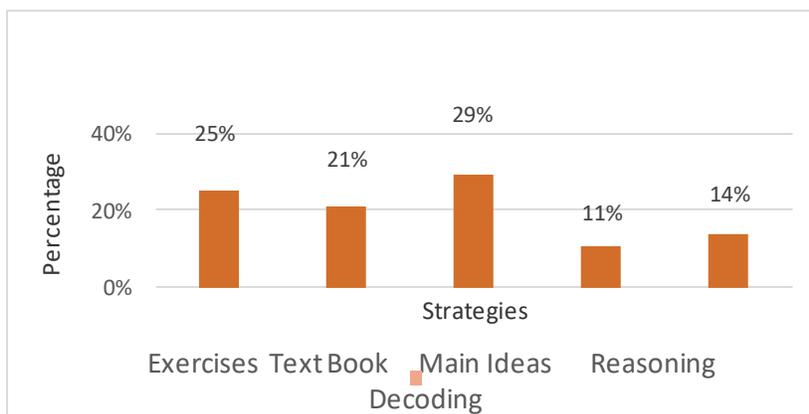


Figure 4. Students' reading comprehension strategies.
Source. Survey applied to teachers.

According to the reading activities for improving the lexicon in English, (figure 5) for the 50% of the teachers the activities carried out were individually.

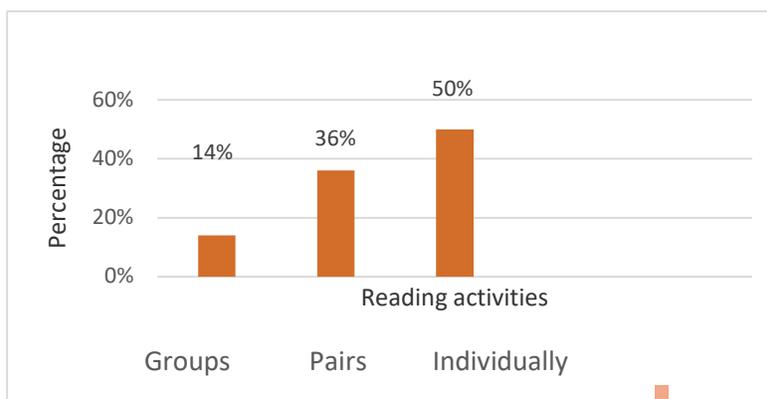


Figure 5. Reading Activities.

Source. Survey applied to teachers.

In reference to the answer about social interactions,(figure 6)it can be evidenced that the 85% of the teachers answered that the language development starts inter-psychologically, in social interaction.

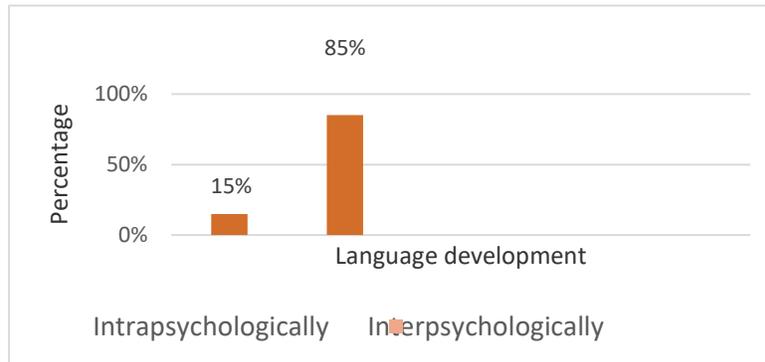


Figure 6. Language Development.

Source. Survey applied to teachers.

With the results obtained from the diagnosis madeand the review of Vygotsky's Socio-Cultural theory, a strategy based on the above-mentioned theory was designed with the objective of significantly improving reading and making it a habit.

Socio-Culturally Based Didactic Strategy for Improving the Students' Reading Skills

Reading has become one of the most elementary intellectual processes to facilitate learning since the elementary school years (primary and secondary); the curriculum includes its promotion as one of its main objectives. The diagnosis of teachers working in different schools in the city of Esmeraldas shows that they have important didactic deficiencies in the achievement of this objective, which negatively affects the reading comprehension levels of their students.

The strategy proposed is structured into three Stages:

STAGE 1: Preparatory Socio-Interactional Reading

Objective: to get the students be prepared before the reading process starts by means of socio-interactive activities, which activate the students' mental schema.

Teachers' Actions: to socialize the content and vocabulary of the reading text using other examples, presenting pictures and videos, and by means of questions. For instance, the teacher may ask students questions about the topic or title of the reading. In addition, the teacher may request the students to repeat the selected vocabulary twice to have a better pronunciation.

Students' Actions: follow the teachers' instruction to socialize the content of the reading texts, to discuss the given topic and to interact with others in pairs or groups.

STAGE 2: Socio-Interactional Reading

Objective: to create an interactive environment where the students can interchange ideas about the reading content with other classmates.

Teacher's Actions: to orient the reading activity in pairs or groups. The teacher must make sure that the students understand exactly what they must do once they have finished reading, as well as to be attentive to the students' call to clear up any doubts that they may have.

Students' Actions: to read, to do exercises and to negotiate meanings. Once the students are working in groups, they can divide the work in case it is extensive, otherwise, if they work in pairs, they can do the same activity but giving their opinions or explaining the reasons for their answers. They can also exchange their answers with the other pairs.

STAGE 3: Post Socio-Interactional Reading

Objective: to finish the reading and do an activity with what they have learned

Teacher's actions: to facilitate different ideas as activities, presentations, debates.

Students' Actions: they are going to carry out critical analysis of the reading texts by means of debates, presentations. In other words, this is the moment when the students express or give their opinions about the topic, explain what they have learned or developed in class, can use different digital tools, or simply make use of some manual figures.

Discussion

The results obtained in this investigation confirm what Falk-Ross (2015) states: "reading is a number of interactive processes between the reader and the text, in which readers use their knowledge to build, to create, and to construct meaning"(p.10). Through an interactive process can develop a more effective reading, and it is through social interaction that students can acquire knowledge, not only from the teacher but also from classmates.

Additionally, the current results coincided with the one provided by Vygotsky (1978) who expressed that humans develop the ability to acquire meaningful speech in their interaction with others. For example, in their interactions with adults, children continually ask the names of things, because most of the teachers indicated that the reading activities are better developed in groups or pairs.

Also, there is a coincidence with the declaration of Klingler (2005) "didactic strategies point to the group of developed activities considering not only students' understanding of ideas, but also a mutual relationship among specific information and a particular activity, as a general norm of input" (p.2). The results show that the students of different schools in Esmeraldas develop a good reading process by means of identifying main ideas, doing exercises, and sharing ideas in the classroom.

The results of the present investigation coincided with those obtained by Scrivener (1994) in the fact that the students have the intention to appropriate the main details of the reading text when they read to understand the material (p.16). This means that the student focuses on the language more than the text, the readers read in the text, focusing on the new vocabulary, grammatical forms, and the problems of the text; while in the survey it is evident that the students of different institutions in Esmeraldas are focused on the language, they have with low analysis about reading contents.

However, the natural reading comprehension strategies used by Madariaga and Martínez (2010): reading the text three times, using the students' prior knowledge, and finally making a short summary of maximum three lines, do not totally coincide with the didactic strategies given in this research because in the present strategy, a preparation for reading with socio-interactive activities is needed.

According to Gracia (2021), most students are not motivated at the time of starting reading activities, this coincides with the present research because teachers revealed that students have a very low motivation and certain students express that they do not like to read.

Conclusions

The most relevant problems that students face regarding their reading skills are insufficient critical thinking and low analysis about the reading content, what limits their correct understanding of the reading

texts, and their communication of ideas of what they have read. This interferes in their English language learning.

To carry out the reading process, teachers use social interaction occasionally in class with the desire that all students participate, and some can learn from others. Two of the most used strategies by the teachers are: student-student interaction and student-teacher interaction to exchange ideas regarding the topic read and to reach a conclusion.

The reading comprehension strategies carried out by students in class are: identifying main ideas, doing exercises and decoding. However, it is important to say that these strategies have not been successful because they have been developed on an individual manner.

The main Strategic actions of a Socio-Culturally Based Didactic Strategy to Improve Reading Skills form part of three main stages: Preparatory Socio-Interactional Reading, Socio-Interactional Reading, and Post Socio-Interactional Reading. In the first, teachers get the students activate their mental schema by means of different activities that imply social interaction, in the second one the teacher guides the students to work in pairs or groups, manipulating the content, exchanging ideas/opinions with other classmates, and in the third the students present a critical analysis of the reading texts.

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