

Reading Comprehension Strategy to Improve Students' Critical Thinking Skills

Verónica Panchi Candonga (alexvero76@gmail.com)

Unidad Educativa Fiscomisional "San Daniel Comboni", Esmeraldas, Ecuador

Marjorie Perlaza Rodríguez (marjorie.perlaza@pucese.edu.ec)

Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Esmeraldas

Abstract

The main purpose of the present research was to design a reading comprehension strategy to improve critical thinking skills in tenth grade students at "Simon Plata Torres" Senior School in Esmeraldas. It was a combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, that relies on the principle of complementarity. A descriptive investigation was followed using the analysis and hermeneutics methods based on data interpretation. Furthermore, the survey and observation techniques were applied to a community sample of 30 students to identify the strategies that students developed in the reading learning process of English inside the classroom, and three teachers of English of the tenth level of basic education were observed to point out the strategies that they use to teach reading comprehension. Moreover, a test was applied to diagnose the level of students' critical thinking and identify if they correctly use the reading comprehension strategies deeply explained in this investigation. The analysis of collected data showed that the students are limited to read a text quickly to find specific information; because of this, they are not able to contrast information and summarize effectively. Meanwhile, the teachers of English do not use the appropriate reading comprehension strategies in the learning process due to the lack of information to apply reading techniques and of activities that must be used according to the students' needs. In summary, his research remarked the strong relationship between reading comprehension and critical thinking based on Piaget's theory of constructivism, reading approach and Freire's critical thinking which coincide with some studies related to teaching critical thinking skills on reading comprehension focusing the attention on reading activities and students' opinions interaction to foster a more innovative education.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Reading Comprehension Strategy, Teaching-Learning Process

Introduction

Currently, students take reading comprehension tests which are not directly made from students' textbooks, but rather the texts are sometimes beyond their acquired knowledge with reference to ability. Lai (2011) asserts that critical thinkers are successful in analyzing argument, evaluating, and decision making.

According to Ku (2009), autonomy in second language classes is possible when teachers target learner's potential for learning through critical reflection. Students must criticize information and learn to maximize their skills to judge information, evaluate alternative evidence and discuss with logical reasons. Wagner (1997) states that critical thinking and critical instruction are two important factors to develop potential for learning through critical reflection. Without active critical thinking nobody can succeed in any area.

Consequently, it takes into consideration to improve critical thinking should be developed through reading comprehension that is a skill of paramount importance in all English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts. Griffith & Ruan (2005) argued that reading comprehension is a complex process, because English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language, learners need effective reading skills to master their reading. Despite all attention investment and efforts in the field of English teaching, students seem to suffer from many considerable weaknesses in the area of reading comprehension. According to Paul (1992) in most educational systems, students turn to rote learning resulting in misunderstanding, prejudice, and discouragement in which students use some short-term techniques to

tackle their short-term problems including memorization. In other words, establishing such techniques block students' thinking about what they read.

Most students are not good enough on reading abilities to get information and analyze it; thus, they present difficulties at the college. It is so struggling for students to achieve their real educational goals enhance to the next level. Therefore, the problem confronted within this research is the existing relationship within reading comprehension and critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, reading comprehension is a complex process that requires efforts in English teaching and language learners. Critical thinking entails many kinds of intellectual skills such as analyzing, interpreting, and synthesizing information. This means that it is necessary to take three school years at least to deal with challenges at the college. Therefore, the current research establishes the following question:

Which reading comprehension strategy may contribute to improve tenth grade students' critical thinking skills at "Simon Plata Torres" Senior High School in Esmeraldas?

The main purpose of the present research is to design a reading comprehension strategy to improve tenth level students' critical thinking at "Simon Plata Torres" Senior High School in Esmeraldas Province. On the other hand, the specific objectives were focused on the following to identify the strategies that students develop in the reading learning process of English inside the classroom, to recognize the strategies that teachers use to teach reading comprehension, to diagnose the level of students' critical thinking and students get involved in the process.

For the implementation of the reading process, it would be good to refresh some good learning theories and approaches, especially in the reading process to be in line with expectations in developing talent and potential learners.

The Sociocultural Theory

The Sociocultural theory tries to explain human cognitive development regarding social and cultural development. In this theory, human cognition and its development cannot be separated from the society and culture in which it is used. As a matter of fact, sociocultural theory puts the emphasis on social aspects and regards it as primary for cognitive development. Based on the tenets of sociocultural theory, social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition and learning occurs through participation in social or cultural context. In Vygotsky's view, learning does not occur in isolation. Instead, it is strongly influenced by social interaction which takes place in meaningful contexts; in other words, the social interaction with more knowledgeable impacts their ways of thinking and interpreting situations (Packer & Goicoechea, 2000).

Vygotsky argued "learning is strongly influenced by interacting with adults, children induce or infer the structure of the concepts and the meanings of the words that underlie adult speech, and this process derives from the need to define and redefine the meanings, since words are used in different referential contexts" (Cárdenas & Guaman, 2013, pág. 33).

Zone of Proximal Development

All new learning is not only possible to the extent that it interacts with others, but it also takes place thanks to the fact interaction sets in internal psychological processes, it would not be activated by individual resources.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) was proposed by Vygotsky as a reaction to the accepted belief in psychology that development is what a person can do alone. According to Vygotsky development is future development or the potential progress a person makes with others' assistance (Cherry, 2020).

Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) proposed that every child has a zone of actual development and a zone of proximal development. The zone of actual development is defined by what a child can accomplish on his/her own, or the mental functions of a child have been established because of certain already completed developmental cycles.

However, the zone of proximal development occurs when children are faced with a task, they cannot accomplish on their own but need the help of a teacher, expert or another capable peer to complete and comprehend the task. Furthermore, Vygotsky stated that teachers could teach new things to students only when they are in their ZPD. The work of Vygotsky is instrumental in planning for student success as students need to be supported in the transition from what is new and unknown to the internalization, understanding and automaticity of a task/concept (Kurt, 2020).

Constructivism Theory

Piaget's theory focuses attention on the needs of the child and encourages educators to allow children space to engage in concrete experiences and explore the world around them. Therefore, education has a great purpose which is to promote the intellectual, affective, and social growth of the child, considering that this growth is the result of certain evolutionary natural processes. It means authentic and innate qualities of the human being (UK Essays, 2018).

Additionally, Piaget's theory of constructivism argues that people produce knowledge and form meaning based upon their experiences. It covered learning theories, teaching methods, and education reform (O'Loughlin, 1992). Two of the key components, which create the construction of an individual's new knowledge, are accommodation and assimilation. Assimilating causes an individual to incorporate new experiences into the old experiences. This permits the individual to develop new outlooks, rethink what were once misunderstandings, and evaluate what is important, altering their perceptions. On the other hand, accommodation is related to the world and new experiences into the mental capacity already presented. Thus, learners conceive a particular way in which they create new schemata or change old ones with new information. Therefore, when things do not operate within that context, the alternative is to construct new schemata and reorganize the expectations with the outcomes.

Scheme Theory

Meanwhile, Modern cognitivists have developed new trends and theories that provide theoretical models for explaining and conceptualizing reading comprehension by utilizing a set of related concepts, such as critical thinking, prior knowledge, inference-making, and metacognitive skills (Zabit, 2010). Among these trends is schema theory, which is a theory about knowledge: how knowledge is represented and organized, and how that representation and organization facilitate the use of a reader's prior knowledge to improve reading comprehension. A schema is the organized knowledge about people, objects, places, events, processes, concepts, and virtually everything that provides a basis for learning (Rumelhart, 1984). Wilson & Anderson, 1986).

Although, Wilson & Anderson (1986) indicated that schema theory explains how people's existing knowledge affects comprehension. Critical thinking can be considered as means to activate or construct schema. McNeil (1992) asserts that schema theory has special relevance for teachers of reading comprehension in that it questions the traditional view that students should learn to reproduce the statements being read in the text. On the other hand, this older view of reading comprehension, schema theory, stresses an interactive approach that views teaching reading comprehension as a process, meaning that students are taught techniques for processing texts, such as making inference, activating prior knowledge, and using critical thinking (Orbea & Villabeitia, 2010). In addition, other authors explain that schema theory has the major influence on new views of reading and reading comprehension. They stated that:

New views have forced us to rethink the act of reading. For a long time, we thought reading was the reproduction of the ideas on the page; our goal was to have students produce a “photocopy” of the page. Schema theory has moved us away from a reproductive view to a constructive view. In that view, the reader, rather than the text moves to the center of the construction process (Tierney & Pearson, 1986, pág. 3).

According to the schema theory, there are no final conclusions that can be reached for the text (Yu-hui, Li-rong, & Yue, 2010). The Schema theory deals with the reading comprehension as an interactive process between readers’ prior knowledge and the text which has been read. A reader sometimes may finish his reading with a different understanding, based on his previous experiences of richness or paucity. Besides, a reader with a rich background will comprehend better than one who has a worst background. In short, schema theory believes in open text or context. The interpretation is relative (Aloqaili, 2005). For the study, reading comprehension can be defined as the meaning constructed because of the complex and interactive processes related to a reader’s critical thinking, prior knowledge, and inference-making.

The Reading activity merely involves decoding printed patterns into words and understanding the meaning, but reading comprehension is a complex deciphering meaning process which is very much influenced by the readers and their ability to accomplish the reading tasks (Bursuck & Damer, 2007). Thus, the constructivist viewed reading comprehension as a dynamic and constructive meaning making process, involving reader- text interaction. The effectiveness of this meaning making process depends on readers’ self-characteristic and their active role in the meaning making process. Therefore, it is important to start a reading process with skimming and scanning techniques.

Skimming and Scanning

Skimming and scanning are reading techniques that use rapid eye movement and keywords to move quickly through text for slightly different purposes. Skimming is reading rapidly to get a general overview of the material. Scanning is reading rapidly to find specific facts. While skimming tells what general information is within a section, scanning helps readers to locate a particular fact.

Therefore, with the scanning technique, the students look for specific information within a text such as dates, names, places, among others and it is defined as the ability to locate specific facts and details quickly, is regarded as a desirable reading skill and is taught in most development reading courses. Meanwhile, skimming is getting the main idea or gist of a selection quickly in a written text where the students develop powers of inference through systematic practice which encourages them to anticipate a text. So, skimming can help the students to find the key words that permit them to infer the general sense of a text to interpret it faster and advance the reading process (Maxwel, 1972).

Skimming and Scanning are reading techniques that teachers use to improve the reading comprehension process to get a general overview of the material and find specific facts. When the students master those reading techniques, they are ready to develop critical reading.

Critical Reading

Wallace (2003) argues that critical reading means that a reader applies certain processes, models, questions, and theories that result in clarity and comprehension. In critical reading there is a real engagement in effort and understanding. It gets at "deep structure", that is, logical consistency, tone, organization, and several other very important sounding terms.

Critical reading enjoys several features which make it appears notably in critical thinking. Among those features it could be mentioned previewing, contextualizing, questioning to understand and remember, reflecting on challenges to your beliefs and values, outlining and summarizing, evaluating an argument,

comparing related readings. Reading instruction needs to consider different types of learners and their needs (Pang, et al., 2003).

Critical Reading Strategies

Critical Reading notes that all languages require interpreting in context. Meaning is not contained merely within the written text, but it is created in interaction with a reader. Moreover, the meaning created is dynamic. It follows that people bring not just linguistic and world knowledge to reading also, interpretive, and critical resources. Learners are required not just an adequate knowledge of the language and the world, but an ability to adapt a critical attitude to question and challenge a written choice of discourses. Interpretive resources shared by communities of readers are social as much as individuals.

An approach which uses meaning lying within the text can be avoided by trying to create an interaction between the reader and the text. For achieving this goal and developing critical reading skills, particular kinds of activities can be created. Most successful readers do some combinations strategies:

Previewing

This strategy means gathering as much information about the text as one can before actually beginning to read it. In previewing, students generate questions which help them view texts from a wider perspective and also understand the text's social, political, historical, and cultural content. In other words, to read critically, a reader needs to contextualize and recognize the differences among his contemporary values and attitudes and those represented in the text; generating questions such as above will enable the reader to look at the text critically.

Annotating

Annotating is an important skill to employ if somebody wants to read critically. Successful critical readers, Varaprasad (1997, pág. 26) believes, read with a pencil in their hands, making notes in the text as they read. Instead of reading passively, they create an active relationship with what they are reading by "talking back" to the text in its margins. This strategy is necessary for critical reading because it helps the reader to focus his attention on the content and language of the text. Making the main points helps to focus on the most important ideas of text and distinguish the central points and the most important points.

Summarizing

Summarizing the text is a valuable way to check students' understanding of the text. When you summarize, they should be able to write down the following things from the text: thesis and the main points of the piece. A summary writing task learner can evaluate, synthesize creatively, give comments, or write their reflections on what they have read. Putting their ideas together again in their own words and in a concise form shows how reading critically can lead to deeper understanding of any text.

Analyzing

Analyzing a text means breaking into its parts to find out how these parts relate to one another. The overall piece could help them better understand a text meaning. Due to this, Varaprasad (1997) argued that to analyze a text, analyzing evidence, assumptions, sources and author's bias discerning the function of several parts of a piece of writing and their relationship.

An essential way in developing critical skills is being able to distinguish fact from opinion. As a critical reader, learners should not accept anything to face value, on the contrary; recognize every assertion as an argument that must be carefully evaluated.

Re-Reading

It is a crucial phase of the critical reading process. Good readers will reread a piece several times until they are satisfied. It is recommended that one reads a text three times to make as much meaning as possible. The first time to read a text, skim it quickly for its main ideas. Pay attention to the introduction, the opening sentences of paragraphs, and section headings, if there are any. Previewing the text in this way it gets off to a good start when read critically. The next stage, deep reading should relate the content of the text to the research question. Besides, taking time to highlight key ideas and may be the most important strategy to master if it wants to become a critical reader. The third reading should consider any questions by writing short comments in margins; a reader should use this reading to find out any unfamiliar words and be sure that he has understood any complicated paragraphs of the text.

Responding

Finally, responding to what one reads is an important step in understanding what he or she reads. It means that a good reader can respond about what he/she has read to others. The aforementioned strategies can be applied both individually (when reading for oneself) and in the classroom directed by the instructor. Applying critical reading strategies in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), classrooms will take different forms with different groups of learners because students come to classroom with different levels of language and learning experiences in their first language.

In conclusion, reading for learning requires a conscious effort to make links, understand opinions, research, and apply what students learn to their studies. Consequently, reading becomes not simply a way to see what is said but also recognize and interpret what is said, considering subtleties such as bias, assumptions and the perspectives of the author. Therefore, academic reading means understanding the author's interpretation of reality, which may be very different from learner's own. Meanwhile, learning background is related to develop understanding the meaning of the details. To engage with students' ideas and opinions, rethink them in a positive and constructive way.

Antecedents

In recent years, the field of research on reading comprehension and critical thinking has received much attention and became a popular area in cognitive psychology. There are researchers who based on the deficient of critical thinking in young people, due to the lack of reading habit as well as the effective reading strategies that contribute to the teaching learning process. They are popular topics for debates, forums, and conferences in the role of education; it is the need to help students on reading comprehension to improve their critical thinking skills.

In this context, the study improving EFL reading habits in adolescent students from Public high Schools in Ecuador was focused on determining learners' reading habits in English as a Foreign Language through the implementation of reading corners and workshops, and how teachers and parents motivate students to enhance reading habits. The participants were teachers, parents, and students who belonged to eighth, ninth, and tenth years of high schools in the coast, Sierra, and Amazon regions of Ecuador. This research used a mixed-method approach with qualitative and quantitative methods to collect and analyze data for six months. The results of this investigation showed that students' EFL reading habits were very weak before the intervention. Most of the teachers and some parents motivated students to improve their EFL reading skills through different techniques, strategies, activities, and educational resources; however, the implementation of workshops and reading corners contributed to enhancing this skill (Jaramillo, et al., 2019).

Another study carried out to investigate the impact of teaching critical reading strategies on the development of critical reading ability of EFL learners an experimental research where the participants were assigned in two groups after being homogenized through a test. After the pretest, the same content was taught to both groups with the only difference that the experimental group was taught critical reading

strategies such as annotating, questioning, outlining, summarizing, and inferencing while in the control group the common comprehension-based approach was applied. According to the data analysis through an independent test formula proved that teaching critical reading strategies could have a significant effect on the development of critical reading ability of the learners and it led to the rejection of null hypothesis. The findings can have implications for EFL learners and teachers in developing an authentic, interactive, and learner-centered environment in their reading classes.

The present study has as main goal to review and analyze the relationship between reading comprehension and critical thinking. It discussed how modern cognitivists have developed new trends and theories that provide theoretical models for explaining and conceptualizing reading comprehension by utilizing a set of related concepts. Among these trends is the schema theory that is about how knowledge is structured in memory and how these structures affect incoming information (Bos & Anders, 1990).

Additionally, improving reading comprehension through directed reading-thinking activity (DRTA) strategy is a paper that highlights the findings of a study which was undertaken at Islamic State College of Palangka Raya. The aim of the study was to describe how the Directed Reading Thinking Activity (henceforth DRTA) strategy can improve reading comprehension. The data were taken from observation, field notes, questionnaire, and achievement test. The result reveals that the DRTA not only improves students' comprehension, it also increases their motivation for learning (Erliana, 2011).

Among the four language skills, reading is very important, because every aspect of life involves reading. (Anderson & Anderson, 2003) define text as something constructed when a person speaks or writes to communicate a message. The reading activity begins when a reader tries to understand the meaning of the transferred message.

Researchers have found that it is important to develop teaching reading strategies to increase students' comprehension. At the same time, they have found many teachers lack a solid foundation for teaching these reading comprehension strategies (National Reading Panel, 2005). Therefore, teachers need to be prepared, through professional development on how to design effective comprehension strategies and how to teach these strategies to their students.

From many strategies in teaching expository texts, (Stauffer, 1969) stated that Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is the most appropriate strategy that meets the requirement of comprehension (build schemata, provide opportunities in using reading strategy, and enable the students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading process).

In summary, the research findings showed effective and suitable strategy to improve reading comprehension in terms of providing the students opportunity to use reading strategies, to enhance students' self-confidence, and to produce independent learners.

Method

The investigation was carried out to tenth grade students at "Simon Plata Torres" Senior High School in Esmeraldas. It is a public school located in km. 71/2 via Atacames with 975 students and 54 teachers. The English language is taught from the 2nd grade to 3rd year of the Bachillerato General Unificado with three teachers of English in all the institution.

Analysis and Hermeneutics methods were used in this research since it was based on data interpretation. Hermeneutic analysis enabled to elicit an in-depth understanding of meanings of reading comprehension and critical thinking. The techniques utilized in this study consisted of a survey aimed to an intentional sample of 30 tenth grade students, 16 girls and 14 boys with an average age of 14 to 16 years old at "Simon Plata Torres" Senior High School in Esmeraldas province. In December 2019, the survey was applied to identify the English reading learning process that learners developed in the classroom.

Furthermore, a test was applied to diagnose the level of students' critical thinking and identify if the students correctly use the reading comprehension strategies deeply explained in this investigation. In the end, an observation guide was applied for six weeks to point out the strategies that teachers of English use to develop reading comprehension.

Furthermore, in this research, data is getting through survey, observation and Reading test. Technique data analysis that used in this research is quantitative and qualitative approach. Quantitative analysis was getting from the result of survey and test; while analysis qualitative was getting the data from the result of observation toward the teachers and students.

Results

In relation to the item purpose to read (figure 1), the results revealed that 57% of the students do not have a purpose in mind when they read.

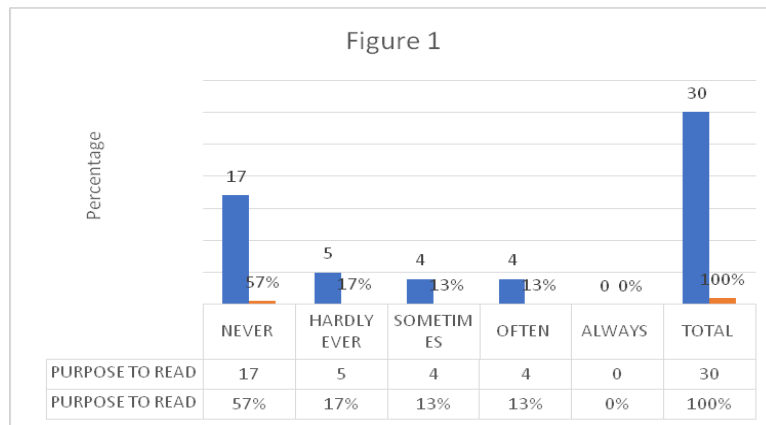


Figure 1. Purpose to read.

Source: Survey applied to the students.

Regarding the use of scanning as a strategy to read, (Figure 2), the results showed that 80% of the students displays the text in a general way before reading.

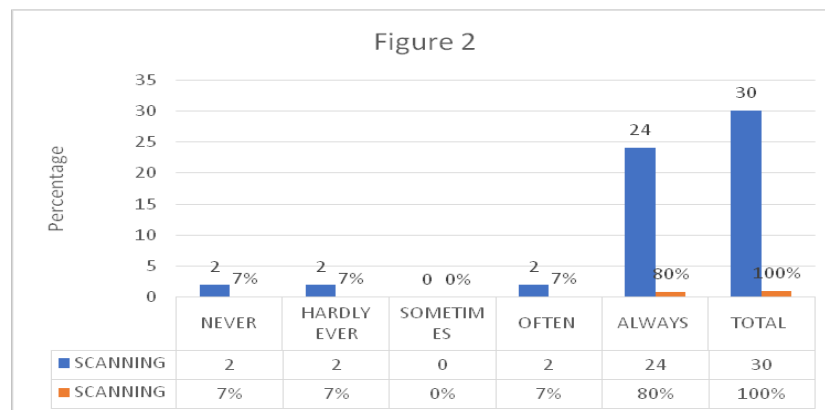


Figure 2. Scanning.

Source: Survey applied to the students.

According to the use of skimming as a strategy to read (figure 3), the results revealed that 27% of the students hardly ever decide what to read carefully and what to ignore when they are reading.

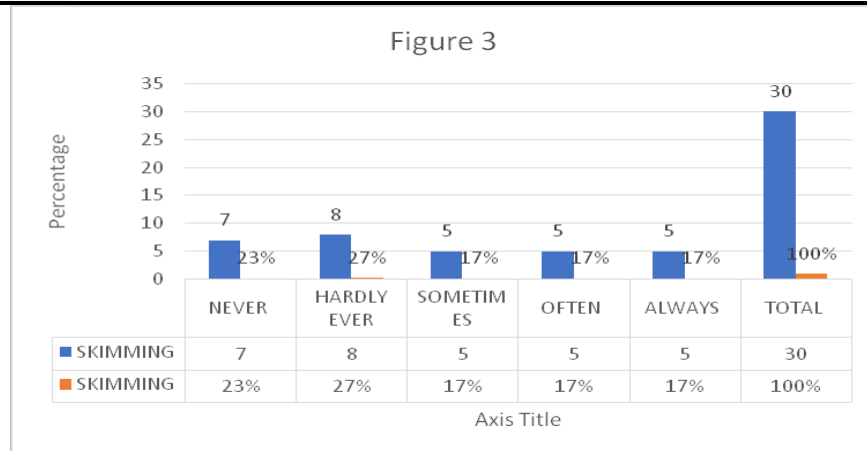


Figure 3. Skimming

Source: Survey applied to the students

Referring to the reading test (Table 1), the result demonstrated that 50% of the students can recognize the main idea and 30% of learners took notes in the reading test.

Reading test items	F.	F.R.	F %
Main ideas	15	0,50	50%
Take notes	9	0,30	30%
Facts and opinions	2	0,07	7%
Summarizing	4	0,13	13%
Total	30	1	100%

Table 1: Reading Test

Source: Critical thinking test.

In table 2 it can be observing that the strategies skimming and scanning predominate with 50% and 33%.

Strategies used by teachers	F.	F.R.	F %
Skimming	2	0,33	33%
Scanning	3	0,50	50%
Prediction	0	0,00	0%
Answer questions	1	0,17	17%
Total	6	1	100%

Table 2: Strategies Used by Teachers

Source: Observation guide aimed at teachers.

Proposal

The current proposal is related to the English reading strategies in tenth grade students at “Simon Plata Torres” Senior High School in Esmeraldas, where most students faced problems developing reading

abilities in an appropriate way. Learners' progress in basic level should be fluently and read smoothly at a good pace hence, it has depended on strategies to encourage students to be able to read more fluently with comprehension and retention. Therefore, a failure in reading could lead a frustration in school and low self-confidence.

Technically, reading is the process of gaining meaning from print to obtain a great amount of information in a short time from textbooks. For some learners, reading is a passion, an avenue to which they could turn, to escape the challenges of life, a place where their most terrific fantasies might come true. For others, it is a tedious chore, where nothing makes sense and even reading a small sentence requires a mammoth effort.

The reasons why learners cannot read properly varied. This study focused on the lack of use of reading strategies, students' active involvement during the teaching and learning process and motivation. The current proposal allows enhancing students' critical thinking skills through a reading comprehension strategy and stimulates them to acquire the knowledge and create interpersonal and team skills as well.

The proposed strategy starts from a current conceptualization of learning as dialectical process of appropriation of content and how knowledge is represented and organized, and how that representation and organization facilitates the use of a reader's prior knowledge to improve reading comprehension. The Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is a comprehension strategy that guides students in asking questions about a text, making predictions, and then reading to confirm or refute their predictions. DRTA has three phases: pre-reading, guided silent-reading and post reading. This process encourages learners to be active and thoughtful readers, enhancing their comprehension and increase their motivation for learning. The teacher takes an active role as he prepares students to read the text by pre-teaching important vocabulary, eliciting prior knowledge, teaching students how to use a specific reading skill, and providing a purpose for reading.

During the teaching and learning process, the teacher's involvement was very important to provide help for the students in achieving the goal for learning: to comprehend the content of the text. However, the help provided by the teacher does not merely test students' memory of the reading text. On the contrary, the procedure followed leads the students to process the text by providing guidance and at the same time gradually release the responsibility to the students.

After reading, the teacher engages students in a discussion focusing on the purpose for reading, and follow-up activities that focus on the content of the text and the specific skill that students learned to use.

DIRECTED READING THINKING ACTIVITY

Pre-Reading



The teacher selects vocabulary words from the text to be pre-taught. The words you choose should be critical to comprehend the passage and unfamiliar to most of the students. The vocabulary should be taught in context. Write the words on the board taken directly from the text. As a class, discuss what the words might mean based on the context, structure (e.g., prefixes, roots, or suffixes), and/or sound (i.e., deciding if the word sounds like another familiar word) of the word.

For instance, the teacher introduces the key words "film" and "pollution" to students. For those words, the teacher presents a list of words from the text to put them in the correct key word column. The teacher includes enough surrounding sentences so that students have sufficient context to figure out what the word might mean.

Words: reuse, documentary, shot, recycle, spoiler, waste, dump, scene.

Sentences:

A product eliminated as no longer useful.
A site for depositing garbage.
Use again or more than once.

Film 	Pollution 

Elicit Prior Knowledge

Elicit prior knowledge on the topic of the text. The teacher asks students, for example: "What do you already know about pollution?" "What experiences do you have with pollution?"



During Reading

The purpose of this phase is to encourage students to monitor their comprehension while they are reading. Students read up to the first pre-selected stopping point. The teacher then prompts the students with questions about specific information and asks them to evaluate their predictions and refine them if necessary. This process should be continued until students have read each section of the passage.

Reading text: A Plastic Ocean: a film review

A Plastic Ocean is a film to make you think. Think, and then act. We need to take action on our dependence on plastic. We've been producing plastic in huge quantities since the 1940s. Drink bottles, shopping bags, toiletries and even clothes are made with plastic. 1) What happens to all the rest? This is the question the film A Plastic Ocean answers. It is a documentary that looks at the impact that plastic waste has on the environment. Spoiler alert: the impact is devastating.



Task 1 Match the missing sentences (a–e) with the correct place in the text (1–5).

- This prompts them to travel around the world to look at other areas that have been affected.
- These are contrasted with scenes of polluted cities and dumps full of plastic rubbish.
- We live in a world full of plastic, and only a small proportion is recycled.
- The results are disastrous, but it is not too late to change.
- But the film does not only present the negative side.

After Reading

At the end of each section, students go back through the text and think about their predictions. Students should verify or modify their predictions by finding supporting statements in the text. The teacher asks questions such as: What do you think about your predictions now? What did you find in the text to prove your predictions? What did you read in the text that made you change your predictions?

Moreover, the teacher should provide students hints, for instance: I believe, I think, I consider and so on. They are helpful for learners to express their ideas, opinions, suggestions about a specific topic.

Discussion

To support the results in terms of the study carried out reading comprehension strategy to improve students' critical thinking, it is necessary to state the views of some cognitive experts regarding the two variables included. The definition of reading comprehension by Bursuck & Damer, (2007), is a complex deciphering meaning process which is very much influenced by the readers and their ability to accomplish the reading tasks; this construction of meaning during it is a complex process, because learners need effective reading skills to master their reading (Griffith & Ruan, 2005), which according to (Ku, 2009) autonomy in second language classes is possible when teachers target learner's potential for learning through critical reflection, that students must criticize, maximize, judge, evaluate information, and discuss with logical reasons. Therefore, Lai (2011) asserts that critical thinkers are successful in analyzing argument, evaluating, and decision making. Thus, the above claim has been crystallized in the relationship between reading comprehension and critical thinking; besides, the importance of reading comprehension strategies to enhance students' critical thinking. As it can be seen comprehension and critical thinking both are cognitive abilities having cognitive skills in common so, the first can contribute to the enhancing of the other. It supports the purpose of the study that an accurate reading comprehension strategy has a positive effect on critical thinking improvement.

In this regard, taking Some combinations strategies employed in reading comprehension, as Varaprasad, (1997) notes they are previewing, annotating, summarizing, analyzing, re-reading and responding which are what experts include as being at the very core of critical thinking. As to the features here is what experts include as being at the very core of critical thinking: previewing, contextualizing, questioning to understand and remember, reflecting on challenges to your beliefs and values, outlining and summarizing, evaluating an argument, comparing related readings (Pang, et al., 2003).

According to the results of the current investigation, learners' opinion has been the lowest item which reveals the lack of teaching reading comprehension strategies that teachers and students face in the classroom. On the other hand, skimming and scanning are reading strategies that teachers apply in the classroom for general and specific information through systematic practice, which encourages learners to anticipate a text (Maxwel, 1972). It means that these strategies usually provide general and specific information in the reading process. Nevertheless, the general sense of a text in the reading process is not significant to improve students' critical thinking since learners only focus to get information and they cannot move away from a reproductive idea to a constructive one. Thus, to support the above assertion in regard to students' reading test showed that the majority of learners could not read in English whether they just read for class work purposes, or they have to.

Furthermore, reading for pleasure and reading as a hobby should be considered as intrinsic motivation to start a reading comprehension process so as to enhance students' critical thinking. As mentioned, Fostering the Love of Reading: The Affective Domain in Reading Education by Cranner & Castle (1994) recommended that attention to the affective aspects of reading, such as motivation, may help combat the increasing disaffection from reading. All these points of view were confirmed by the study improving EFL reading habits in adolescent students from Public high Schools in Ecuador which corroborated that students' habits were weak because they just read when they had to complete assignments. In accordance with the outcomes, most of the teachers motivated students to improve their reading skills through

different techniques, strategies, activities, and educational resources. At the same time, it is in complete alignment with the relevance of reading comprehension strategies that let learners achieve academic success in the target language.

The statistical analysis showed many difficulties, among which the one lacked reading strategies. Among new trends for explaining and conceptualizing reading comprehension and critical thinking, the scheme theory (Rumelhart, 1984) was analyzed. This theory has especial relevance for teachers of reading comprehension in that it questions the traditional view that students should learn to reproduce the statements being read in the text (McNeil, 1992). Therefore, it relates to observation guides results that this research applied to teachers where it could verify the traditional way that students learn reading. As Tierney & Pearson (1986) note, traditional teachers' thought reading was the reproduction of the ideas on the page. On the other hand, new views have forced to rethink the act of reading such as the scheme theory.

Moreover, build schemata provides opportunities in using reading strategy, and enable the students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their reading process. From many strategies in teaching Reading, Stauffer (1969) stated that Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is the most appropriate strategy that meets the requirement of comprehension. Due to this, the procedure of Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) gets learners involved to think like good readers under the teacher's direct instruction. Thus, students could be able to build schemata by pictures, key words vocabularies given at the pre-reading activities and making predictions. This strategy makes the difference because it encourages students to be active and thoughtful readers.

Besides, it is strongly aimed the use of appropriate reading comprehension strategies in the learning process to apply reading and the activities that could be used according to students' needs. Meanwhile, learners suffer from considerable weaknesses in reading comprehension. In other words, Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) should be an effective strategy to enhance reading comprehension as well as students' critical thinking.

Conclusions

Related to the findings of this research, it could be said that this investigation was proved the need for a new reading comprehension strategy to improve students' critical thinking. It is proven by the survey, observation guide and test results; in the survey for learners, there were 80%, who set out the text in a general way before reading to get specific information therefore, most of them do not master strategies to help them understand the main ideas and relevant details from context. In the observation guide there were 50% (3 of 6 teachers) who applied scanning strategies to do tasks and in the reading test, there were 7% , who could infer the text and express their opinions. For this reason, Students read just because they need to accomplish academic tasks using scanning strategy, but not because they want to improve this skill. Most educators are dependent on the traditional method that has been used in the classroom to share common features which requires rote memorization; it would be useless to teach reading skills in contexts. Besides, lack of reading strategies led teachers not to use the appropriate reading comprehension strategies to improve students' critical thinking in the teaching process.

Hence, Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is chosen because its components promote ways to facilitate the use of reading strategies and this makes learning to be more meaningful. Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA) is one of the strategies in reading that has three core steps of comprehension cycle. They are sample the text, make prediction, and sample the text to confirm or correct previous predictions. These three steps are conducted as before, during and after reading steps so that they fulfill the proper steps of reading comprehension. This guides students step by step in the reading process. Therefore, Directed Reading Thinking Activity strategy could improve learner' reading comprehension and enhance their critical thinking.

References

- Aloqaili, A. S. (2005). Toward a modern standard of reading skills for elementary schools. *Journal of Reading and Literacy*, 77-146.
- Anderson, M., & Anderson, K. (2003). Text Types in English 1. *Macmillan Education Australia*, 45-87.
- Bos, C., & Anders, P. (1990). Interactive Teaching and Learning: Instructional Practices for Teaching Content and Strategic Knowledge. In T. Scruggs, & B. Wong, *Intervention Research in Learning Disabilities* (pp. 166-185). New York: Springer.
- Bursuck, W., & Damer, M. (2007). Teaching Reading to Students Who Are At-Risk or Have Disabilities. *Pearson*, 72-120.
- Cárdenas, B., & Guaman, L. (2013). *La comprensión lectora y su incidencia en el desarrollo del pensamiento reflexivo*. Cuenca: Universidad Politécnica Salesiana.
- Cherry, K. (2020, April 28). *Very well mind*. Retrieved from verywellmind.com: <https://www.verywellmind.com/>
- Cramer, E. H., & Castle, M. E. (1994). *Fostering the Love of Reading: The Affective Domain in Reading Education*. USA: International Reading Association.
- Erliana, S. (2011). Improving reading comprehension through directed reading-thinking activity (DRTA) strategy. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 49-57.
- Griffith, P., & Ruan, J. (2005). *Metacognition in Literacy Learning: Theory, assessment, intructions, and professional development*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Jaramillo, M., Vargas, A., Cabrera, P., Vivanco, L., & Zuniga, A. (2019, October). Improving EFL Reading Habits in Adolescent Students from Public High Schools in Ecuador. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 18(10), 191-202.
- Ku, K. (2009, April). Assessing students' critical thinking performance: Urging for measurements using multi-response format. *Thinking Skills and Creativity*, 4(1), 70-76.
- Kurt, D. S. (2020, August 18). *Educational Technology*. Retrieved from educational technology.net: <https://educationaltechnology.net/>
- Lai, E. (2011). *Critical Thinking: A Literature Review*. US: Pearson.
- Maxwel, M. J. (1972, March). SKIMMING AND SCANNING IMPROVEMENT: THE NEEDS, ASSUMPTIONS AND KNOWLEDGE BASE. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 5(1), 47-59.
- McNeil, J. (1992). Reading Comprehension: New Directions for Classroom Practice. *HarperCollins Publishers*.
- O'Loughlin, M. (1992). Rethinking Science Education: Beyond Piagetian Constructivism. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 4.
- Orbea, J., & Villabeitia, E. (2010). The teaching of reading comprehension and metacomprehension strategies. A program implemented by teaching staff. *Annals of Psychology*, 112-122.
- Packer, M., & Goicoechea, J. (2000). Sociocultural and Constructivist Theories of Learning: Ontology, Not Just Epistemology. *Educational Psychologist*, 227-241.
- Panel, T. N. (2005). Practical Advice for Teachers. *Eric*, 35-48.
- Pang, E., Muaka, A., Bernhardt, E., & Kamil, M. L. (2003). *Teaching reading. EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES SERIES-12*. The International Academy of Education-IAE.
- Paul, R. (1992). *Critical thinking: What Every Person Needs to*. Santa Rosa: Foundation for Critical Thinking.
- Rumelhart, M. A. (1984, January 1). When Understanding the Situation is the Real Problem. *Social Casework*, 65(1), 27-33.
- Stauffer, R. (1969). *Directing reading maturity as a cognitive process*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Tierney, R. J., & Pearson, P. D. (1986). Schema Theory and Implications for Teaching Reading: A Conversation. *Reading Education*, 19.
- UK Essays, E. (2018, November). *Essay, UK*. Retrieved from Ukessays.com: <https://www.ukessays.com>
- Varaprasad, C. (1997). Some Classroom Strategies: Developing Critical Literacy Awareness. *Forum*, 35(3), 24-28.
- Vygotsky, L. (1978). Sociocultural Theory. *Simply Psychology*. Retrieved from: <https://www.simplypsychology.org/vygotsky.html>
- Wagner, R. (1997). "Intelligence, Training, and Employment." *American Psychologist*, 52(10), 1059-1069.
- Wallace, C. (2003). *Critical Reading in Language Education*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Wilson, P., & Anderson, R. (1986). Children's book-reading habits: A new criterion for literacy. *Springer*, 72-84.

Yu-hui, L., Li-rong, Z., & Yue, N. (2010). Application of schema theory. *Canadian Social Science*, 6(1), 59-65.

Zabit, M. N. (2010). Problem-Based Learning On Students Critical Thinking Skills In Teaching Business Education In Malaysia: A Literature Review. *American Journal of Business Education*, 3(6), 19.32.

About Authors:

Verónica Panchi Candonga (MA) is a teacher of English at “San Daniel Comboni” Senior High School in Esmeraldas. Her research interests deal with Reading Comprehension and Critical Thinking Skills.

Marjorie Perlaza Rodríguez (MA) is a teacher and researcher at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Ecuador Sede Esmeraldas. Her research interests are related to the Didactics of English, Pedagogical models, Teaching Grammar, Curriculum Development, Educational Evaluation, Inclusion and Diversity to the English class, and Teaching English to rural students.