

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...
Improving Reading Comprehension and Self-directed Learning through the Use of
Explicit Reading Strategies and Personal Blogs on High School Students

University de La Sabana

Master in English Language for Self-directed Learning (Online Program)

Chía, 2013

This research report is the result of my own work and includes some valuable
suggestions and collaboration of my counselors, Prof. Maritza Housset and Prof.

Claudia Acero

Name: Lia D.S. MontalvoBedoya.

Signature:



IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

**Improving Reading Comprehension and Self-directed Learning through the Use of Explicit
Reading Strategies and Personal Blogs on High School Students**

Lia D.S. Montalvo Bedoya

**Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master in English Language for Self-directed Learning (Online Program)**

Directed by: Professor Claudia Acero

Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

Universidad de La Sabana

Chía, 2013

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...**Declaration**

I hereby declare that my research report entitled:

“Improving Reading Comprehension and Self-directed Learning through the Use of Explicit Reading Strategies and Personal Blogs on High School Students”

- Is the result of my own work.
- Declares which is the outcome of work done in collaboration as declared and specified in the text.
- Is neither substantially the same as nor contains substantial portions of any similar work submitted or that is being concurrently submitted for any degree or diploma or other qualification at the Universidad de La Sabana or any other university or similar institution except as declared and specified in the text.
- Complies with the word limits and other requirements stipulated by the Research Subcommittee of the Department of Languages and Cultures;
- Has been submitted by or on the required submission date.

Date: October, 2013.

Full name: Lia Del Socorro Montalvo Bedoya

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lia Montalvo". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light green rectangular background.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...**Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to thank the Principal of Institucion Educativa Concentracion Simon Araujo for totally endorsing the project as well as some other professionals at the school: the Academic Coordinator for creating an atmosphere in which the English school teachers have the opportunity to try out new ideas and foster cooperative learning; the Discipline Coordinator who was very attentive to replace and supervise the teacher-researcher absences when needed; the school technology teacher who was always a supportive and a guide when required; and colleagues in the English team who were my co evaluators during the final test.

Secondly, gratitude also goes to the staff from Universidad de La Sabana and Anaheim University for providing graduate students not only with professional training, but also with lots of resources and reference material to grow professionally and showed us the way what independent learning consists on.

Thirdly, gratitude to those parents who gave permission to their children to participate in this research study and allowed the teacher-researcher publish samples of their children's work and take photographs of them while getting involved in the research activities. In addition, thanks to all the students who provided the teacher-researcher with new ideas while participating in class discussions or activities, their questions and learning.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Lastly, gratitude and love to those relatives who perfectly understood what a research process implied, and offered their love and understanding; and also to God for the serenity and patience to endure when stressful moments came, for opening a world full of possibilities that combined with theory and desire to change allowed the teacher-researcher of this study define new learning strategies that supported the students at Institucion Educativa Concentracion Simon Araujo.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...**Abstract**

This research project focused on the implementation of some reading strategies to foster reading comprehension and self-directed learning in an English as a foreign language context. It was conducted with two sub- groups of eleventh grade and tenth grade students at I.E. Concentracion Simon Araujo, a public high school in the city of Sincelejo, Colombia. They were 30 16-year-old students in total: 11 boys and 18 girls. This research measured quantitatively the process of reading comprehension through the development of a pre-test, a on-going test, and a final post-test, but also used other elicitation procedures such as two un-structured questionnaires, as well as final products in class blogs which were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Other three introspective methods were used: stimulated recalls to analyze their real comprehension which led to specific answers, teacher's journal which was analyzed qualitatively, and member's validation, which was used in order to compare the teacher's notes and two students' perceptions about these same observations. Findings demonstrated that the use of technology and the teaching of phased explicit reading strategies, such as types of texts, finding the main idea, and summarizing, improved students' reading comprehension. In addition, students learned how to improve their learning with the application of different learning styles.

Key Words: Reading Comprehension, Reading Tasks, Reading Strategies, Blog, Self-directed learning.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Resumen

Este proyecto de investigación sobre la aplicación de estrategias de lectura para fomentar la comprensión de lectura y el aprendizaje autónomo, se desarrolló con dos sub-grupos de once grado y décimo grado en. IE Concentración Simón Araujo, una escuela secundaria pública en la ciudad de Sincelejo, Colombia. Fueron 30 alumnos en total: 11 varones y 18 mujeres con una edad promedio de 16 años de edad. Esta investigación en el aula pretendió medir cualitativa y cuantitativamente el proceso de comprensión de la lectura a través de un pre-test, un test intermedio y una prueba final; pero también empleó otros procedimientos de producción tales como cuestionarios no-estructurados y productos finales en los blogs que fueron analizados, tanto cuantitativa como cualitativamente; otros tres métodos introspectivos utilizados fueron: el recuerdo estimulado, con el fin de analizar su comprensión real a través de respuestas específicas; el diario del profesor que se analizó cualitativamente, y la validación de algunos participantes, que se utilizó para comparar las notas del profesor. Los resultados indicaron que el uso de la tecnología y la enseñanza explícita y escalonada de las estrategias de lectura, tales como tipos de textos, identificación de la idea principal, ideas de apoyo y aprender a hacer resumen, mejoraron la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes. Además, los estudiantes aprendieron cómo mejorar su comprensión con la aplicación de los diferentes estilos de aprendizaje.

Palabras clave: Lectura comprensiva, tareas de lectura, estrategias de lectura, blog, aprendizaje auto-dirigido.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	6
Abstract	8
Resumen.....	9
Introduction.....	12
Statement of the problem.....	15
Research objectives	16
Theoretical Framework	19
Reading Comprehension	19
Reading Strategies	20
Pre-reading strategies	22
During reading process strategies.....	23
Self-Directed Learning.....	26
The Use of the Blog as a Self-Directed Learning Tool.....	27
Research Design.....	30
Type of Study	31
Context and Participants	31
Ethical Considerations.....	33
Data Collection Instruments.....	33
Pre-test	34
Final Test.....	35
Stimulated recall	35
Teacher’s Journal.....	36
Open Ended Questionnaire 1.....	36
Open Ended Questionnaire 2.....	36
Teacher’s Blog	36
Data Collection Procedures	37
Validation of Instruments	40

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Data Analysis and Results.....	41
Pre-test.....	42
Ongoing evaluation.....	44
Final test.....	45
Stimulated recall.....	50
Teacher’s journal.....	50
Open questionnaire 2.....	55
My blog.....	57
References.....	65
Appendices.....	67
Appendix A: Pretest (1 of 3).....	67
Appendix B: Ongoing test.....	70
Appendix C: Final test.....	72
Appendix D: Open ended Questionnaire 1.....	75
Appendix E: Open ended Questionnaire 2.....	76
Appendix F: My blog.....	77
Appendix G: Pedagogical Intervention Timeline.....	79
Appendix H: Lesson Plan.....	80
Tables and Figures	
Table 1: results of the pre-test.....	43
Table 2: Pretest: descriptive statistics.....	44
Table 3: Ongoing MC test: Descriptive Statistics.....	45
Table 4: Final Test Essay Part.....	46
Table 5: Final Test MC Answers.....	47
Table 6. Pearson’s Correlation coefficient.....	48
Table 7: Analyzis for the MC Test.....	49
Table 8: Categories and subcategories considered in this study.....	60
Figure 1: Instruments of Data Collection.....	34

Introduction

This research is intended to improve eleventh and tenth graders' reading comprehension level through the use of explicit reading strategies and personal blogs in a public school in Sincelejo, Colombia. The use of blogs as technological tools for the teaching of any area is a great challenge for teachers of the new millennium, especially for English teachers; its use may change the way teachers teach, and - more importantly - the way students learn. Blogs can get students to share their learning with their peers, and get them to work on their reading; also they allow them with spaces to write about personal opinions, activities and experiences. Reading and writing skills are closely related and complementary; it is known that a person who cannot read is not able to write properly. Snow (2002) states that reading comprehension is a process of extracting and constructing meaning through interacting with written language. When students at IE Concentración Simón Araujo School were asked if they liked reading, they gave an emphatic no, unless the reading included graphics, color and even movement and sounds, and this information served as a diagnosis for this work.

The use of a blog emerged as a very helpful tool for participants of this project to develop reading comprehension skills through explicit rules which could be read on the computer screen, and then they could demonstrate understanding by performing exercises

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

attractively written, illustrated and interactive, allowing them to get immediate feedback for guiding and stimulating progress.

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand what is read, in reference to the meaning of words that form a text, and with respect to the context where the text is included. Lots of students find it difficult to get information of what they read and interpret. Colombian studies and the results of the state tests called “Pruebas SABER” which are addressed by Instituto Colombiano para el Fomento de la Educación Superior –ICFES- (Colombian Institute for the Promotion of Higher Education, author’s translation) concluded that in recent years students from across Colombia have increased problems with reading comprehension. Last results showed that only 4.01% received a score above 61 in the area of language, which means that the 95.98% scored below the passing average. SERCE studies -Second Regional Comparative and Explanatory Studies- and PISA studies-Program for International Student Assessment-showed recently that academic achievement is low in both primary and secondary students. In Reading, Mathematics and Science a high number of children do not reach the minimum levels to advance in society. This problem has been reflected in the reality of the IE Concentración Simón Araujo School, not only in the results of English, but in all areas of knowledge, as it has been provided by interactive ICFES web page in the historical report released to each institution every year. According to the last report dated October, 2012, the school was placed in medium or acceptable level for the last 10 years.

As a consequence IE Concentración Simón Araujo School teachers began to think about strategies to improve students' reading comprehension. From the academic

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

coordination of the school, reading sessions were planned including cross-curricular themes developed in agreed schedules; students read texts, and then answered questions about transversal subjects such as Philosophy, Natural Science, and Physical Education. However, these activities did not mean enough effort to overcome the reading comprehension deficiency.

Thus, it emerged the idea of focusing this research project on reading strategies that explicitly helped students improve this academic weakness. For this reason the teacher-researcher considered what Zimmerman & Hutchins (2003) stated about the need to teach reading strategies explicitly in order to help children to be proficient readers.

In addition, the use of the blog was implemented in this project as a technological tool that allowed gradual and growing autonomous learning, starting from a stepwise process of instructions and feedback. That is why, at the beginning of the study, the participants needed a lot of written and oral guidance from the teacher to understand and follow instructions. Also during the first days, the students were permanently stimulated with positive feedback. Reynard (2007) says that blogs can be used effectively to develop Individual learning, but only if they are intentionally designed into the course and are valued clearly throughout the course to ensure student's motivation and participation.

This report is organized basically in five main sections: Introduction, Theoretical Framework, Research design, Data Analysis and Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications. This research about reading strategies concentrated particularly on the development of

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

the students reading comprehension level through the management of some explicit reading strategies; its emphasis was placed on the development of students' self-directed learning to solve written tasks about reading strategies in a blog. The teacher-researcher expected to improve the reading comprehension levels, so that, students would raise their academic performance; and above all, they would be more aware of their own learning styles, that will result on higher levels of motivation and the development of certain reading habits, which are seen by the writer of this report as an essential factor for the acquisition of a higher level of thinking.

Statement of the problem

The problem that motivated the development of this project was basically the poor performance that most of students of the I.E. Concentracion Simon Araujo School demonstrate in understanding texts in English and also Spanish, as it has been evident in their language tests according to reports from 2011. This concern has been discussed by all teachers of the school, and even, the institution has tried to solve this problem by institutionalizing *the Reading Hour* that takes place once a month, giving opportunity to each subjects to participate with a specific topic. This activity has regularly been implemented from 2011 up to date; however, students continued having low results in reading comprehension tests. The I.E. Concentracion Simon Araujo students have not formally received any advice on how to read, they are not aware of the existence of various strategies they may use to gradually understand the content of certain texts.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Given the need to teach reading strategies explicitly, this research focused on teaching some selected strategies through the use of some links and instructions posted on the teacher's blog available at: www.teacher-lia.blogspot.com. So that, each student, after creating their blogs which were directly linked to the teacher's, developed the proposed activities in their personal blogs. The implementation of the use of a blog had the purpose to facilitate learning as well as the adaption or adoption of reading strategies through a series of interactive tasks that allowed the students to participate in the construction of their own knowledge and understanding on how to read. Materials from different school subjects were chosen; also, the level of complexity of the language in the texts was taken into account in order to adapt them just to the students' level of English understanding.

It was observed in the diagnosis phase that the eleventh and tenth grade students showed low levels of reading comprehension, and that they were not aware of the use of reading strategies. Consequently, the research question that guided this study was: *"How can eleventh and tenth graders improve their reading comprehension level through the use of explicit reading strategies and the use of a personal blog to foster self-directed language learning?"*

Research objectives

- To make students aware of the use of reading strategies to raise their reading comprehensive level.
- To examine the role of the teacher-researcher's blog has to improve students' reading comprehension.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

- To encourage learners to become more self-directed through the use of certain reading strategies and the teacher-researcher's blog.

Rationale

The teaching of reading in English is sometimes for specific goals, such as the one that is considered in the context of this study: students are expected to obtain good results in the national examinations called Pruebas Saber, administered by the Colombian Ministry of Education. The main purpose of these national tests is to improve the quality of education by performing periodic measurements of the skills development of school students and getting education indicators. Therefore, Colombian schools are actually interested in the development of strategies that contribute to the high performance of their students in the national examinations, since results are considered as indicators of the quality of education in the educative institutions. Before the implementation of this study, the I.E. Concentracion Simon Araujo school had not considered any strategies to improve the reading comprehension in English, but the 2012-implemented strategy called *Reading Time or Reading Hour* activity. However, the reading materials had been chosen randomly, leading to the perception of having the same level of importance to the development of the four basic skills. Only a low percentage of students, 30%, were able to succeed in the Pruebas Saber and only getting A1 level results. There were some factors that had contributed to this situation. Firstly, students had not learnt or developed adequate strategies to understand authentic reading materials such as the identification of the main idea, deduction of new words, ordering ideas in a paragraph, use of anaphoric elements, ordering words in a

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

sentence, deducing or inferring information, among others. It was also observed that the different levels of comprehension among students could sometimes be considered like an obstacle, and even when successful students did not want to help the not very successful peers. The second factor that provoked the students' low performance is related to a schedule factor which influenced results negatively, since some of the students had to work in the morning, and then they had classes at one o'clock in the afternoon; sometimes, without even having lunch before the classes.

Considering the factors briefly described above, this study focused on groups of eleventh and tenth graders that chose the technology class as an elective course. With the implementation of the strategy conceived by the teacher-researcher, several outcomes were expected: 1. the students would assume a new relationship with English as a foreign language (L2); 2. With the use of a blog, technology would become a learning facilitating tool; 3. the teacher would become a more supportive character in the students' learning process; 4. the students themselves would see them as the main players in their learning process, and 5. with the implementation of several reading strategies, reading would become an enriching habit that goes further than their Pruebas Saber national examination; reading would become an opportunity to get knowledge and cultural awareness.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Theoretical Framework

This section presents some important theorists and their concepts about the different constructs considered as the basis of this study: Reading Comprehension, Reading Strategies, Self-Directed Learning, and the use of the blog as a self-directed learning tool.

Reading Comprehension

This writer of this report considered the theorists listed below as an attempt to define what reading comprehension means, and approach to a definition of reading for the study.

Snow (2002) defines reading comprehension as a process of extracting and constructing meaning through interaction with written language. It is important to notice in this concept how the role of the readers' background contributes to their participation in other's writing to achieve a real understanding. For Yale (2008) reading comprehension is an intentional, active, interactive process that occurs before, during and after a person reads a particular piece of writing. This concept enriches Snow's concept adding the word intentional, which surely has to do with the purpose of the reading. According to Grabe (1997) reading requires efficient knowledge of the world and an efficient knowledge of the language. The inclusion of the good management of the language is crucial when talking about comprehension, because it is the tool to materialize or do observable our ideas and thoughts about what we read. Other writers agree that good readers have to do some extra activities in order to comprehend a text: they should connect new text with past experiences –their background knowledge-, interpret, evaluate, synthesize, and consider alternative

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

interpretations (Pressley & Afflerbach, 1995). Following this same idea, Tankersley (2003) says that making connections is the key of comprehension, understanding by connection the relationship between the writing words and the thinking level.

Snow (2002) states three important elements in the reading comprehension: the reader, the text, and the activity. When talking about the reader, she considers all the capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experience the person brings to the act of reading; when considering the activity, she includes the purposes, processes and consequences of the act of reading. The text is clearly the most external element in the act of reading: it is the writer's contribution to this communication. All these elements interact within a socio cultural context which modifies and sometimes is also modified by the capacities of the readers and the activities in which they are involved with those texts.

According to Tankersley (2003) reading comprehension depends on three factors from the reader: 1. Command of the linguistic structures of the text; 2. Meta cognitive control over the content being read- the reader is aware about his or her own level of understanding while reading the material, and 3. Background in the content and vocabulary being presented. She concludes by saying that making meaning at both the content and the process level is the key to comprehension. As Harvey and Goudvis (2000) state, we must teach our students to access content when they read as well as teach them the strategies they need to better understand text and become more thoughtful readers.

Reading Strategies

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

This study implemented four (4) meta-cognitive strategies during the process: 1. Use of schema; 2. Inferring; 3. Asking questions about the text: before, during and after reading, and 4. Visualizing what is being read. Also some cognitive strategies were implemented: 1. Identifying types of texts; 2. Finding main ideas, and 3. Summarizing.

O'Malley & Chamot (1990) classified learning strategies into three types as follows:

1. Meta cognitive strategies which involve executive process in planning for learning, monitoring one's comprehension and production, and evaluating how well one has achieved a learning objective.
2. Cognitive strategies in which the learner interacts with the material to be learned by manipulating it mentally (as in making images, or elaborating on previously acquired concepts or skills) or physically (as grouping items to be learned in meaningful categories, or taking notes on important information to be remembered).
3. Social/affective strategies, in which learner either interacts with another person in order to assist learning, as in cooperation or asking question for clarification, or uses some kind of affective control to assist a learning task.

Tankersley (2003) stresses and coincides with some other authors such as Snow in the following ideas: the goal of teaching reading strategies to students implies that learners are able to use them automatically as they read; teachers should provide students with guidance and coaching; and finally, students should understand that reading is an interactive process which involves both decoding words and deriving meaning from those words. In the

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

researcher's context, it is common to see how most of the students simply give up reading when they feel lost in their comprehension; however, successful readers develop the ability to connect material to their prior knowledge, make inferences as they read, formulate questions, visualize the information or story action, and synthesize as they read, among other reading strategies.

Important theorists classify reading strategies according to their own styles, but reading strategies are always alike. For the purpose of this study, it was adopted Tankersley's pattern to organize them.

Pre-reading strategies

Linking the student's background knowledge to the new material. Before beginning a reading assignment, the teacher should "set the stage". He could ask students for instance what they know about the topic and what else they want to know about it.

Predictions. As students are prepared to read text, they may make predictions about the possible content or important information from the text. Through this activity, teachers can determine students' prior knowledge regarding the new information. If the book has pictures, they are very useful to make predictions as to content, story progression, or conclusion. If the book does not have pictures, students should examine the cover, chapter titles, and headings, and any summary materials that may be presented such as descriptions on the book jacket, chapter title, chapter summaries, and so forth. The exercise of guessing one missing word in a sentence and explaining why they chose one or other word is also a

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

good way to learn how to make predictions. Vocabulary training in comprehension processing is one of the most essential factors for understanding a text. In addition, it is important the use of a monolingual dictionary, and better whether it is a picture dictionary.

Give a purpose for reading. It is very important that students always have a purpose for reading, at the beginning it is addressed by the teacher, but later, purposes should be built by the students, according to their personal needs. For example, we can say, “Read to find out why Carson has problems when reading” or “Read to find out which netiquette rules you breach when using internet.” This helps students ground themselves in the most important aspect of the text.

During reading process strategies

Types of texts. Although this category is not included as a reading strategy by authors, it was included as one reading strategy in this project, and it really extended the spectrum of what students considered it was a text. It is very interesting to know that each type of text has its own purpose; for instance, a descriptive text illustrates or paints with words a scenario. An informative text describes what happens in a lapse of time. A persuasive text tries to convince the reader to adopt a product or a position; and the instructive text teaches you by some steps about how to get a final task or how to handle a devise.

Finding main ideas. Gunning, T. (2010) defines the main idea as the summary of the main details or ideas in a selection. It is what all the other sentences are about. He says that

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

the main idea is more specific than the topic. For example, a topic might be “guide dogs”, and the general idea about guide dogs might be, “Guide dogs are carefully trained. He also points out the main idea identification as a prerequisite for summarizing, outlining, and taking notes. He warns that the major problem that students have with selecting or constructing main ideas is not including all the details. Students tend to select or construct a main idea that is too narrow. Deriving the main idea requires the practice of some sub skills as 1. Using titles and headings to predict the main idea; 2. Selecting the main idea when directly stated; 3. Selecting the main idea when it is implicit; 4. Using graphic organizers to display the main idea and supporting details; 5. Using a frame to state the main idea and supporting details; 6. Stating the main idea and supporting details; these sub skills have been taught practically in the blog, on-going and final tests by using some illustrative examples)

Summarizing. It requires the ability to identify the main idea and supporting details. It also requires the abilities to select the most important information, combine details, and condense and paraphrase. The major problem that students have with summarizing consists in not knowing how to discriminate between essential and unimportant details so that the summary becomes a retelling. Students also have difficulty organizing information so that their summaries turn out to be just a random listing of whatever they can remember.

Inferring, predicting, and concluding. The ability to make inferences consists on guessing or making conclusions drawn from details. It is important to model the process of making inference, based on some specific observable situation, and some previous

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

knowledge about it. It basically consists on learning to read between lines: the information is apparently absent, but it can be deduced from some other explicit ideas.

Retelling. Consists in asking the students to retell what he or she has read. If students have good comprehension, they should be able to give a good summary to include the more complex and detailed retelling. Students can retell the story in pictures, with puppets, or by acting out the story or a key scene in the story.

Recording story elements. It consists in asking students to find specific elements of a story such as a major character, a minor character, the setting, the title, the author's name, the climax, a problem in the story, a solution or resolution in the story, a plot, etc. This activity can be done independently or in a small group depending on the student's level of familiarity with the given elements. They can also be practiced by ordering sentences, or placing a sentence into a paragraph following a logical sequence.

Using graphic organizers. Graphic organizers such as a "Character Web," "Main Idea Web," "Story map" are visual representations that increase retention and understanding of the material being read.

Inferring, predicting, and concluding. The ability to make inferences consists on guessing or making conclusions drawn from details. It is important to model the process of making inference, based on some specific observable situation, and some previous knowledge about it. It basically consists on learning to read between lines: the information is apparently absent, but it can be deduced from some other explicit ideas.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Self-Directed Learning

From the 70's decade on, different scholars have presented their perspectives on Self-Directed Learning (SDL), many of them overlapping but complementary. Tough (1971), cited by Garrison (2003), for instance, identifies SDL as an intentional and non-formal effort which is controlled by the learner. From this perspective, this paper considers Tough's concept a very inclusive one in terms of age; SDL is aimed not only at adults but also at youngsters: intention is addressed by interest and non-formal, by the lack of scholar objectives, although the context where this non-formal learning takes place can be at school. He also mentioned the use of learning projects as efforts to either acquire new knowledge or to improve any skill performance. He also mentioned the use of varying time intervals or episodes as a constituent characteristic of these learning projects.

This researcher thinks that Tough's theory about SDL was very mature and complete despite being one of the earliest ones, because although he was based on adults' independent efforts, these projects can be applied in formal and informal contexts, by students or by common independent people and because he talked implicitly not only about cognitive skills but about any kind of skill, (affective, social, psychomotor or meta-cognitive).

Knowles (1975) and later Ellinger (2004) coincide in their conception of SDL when they describe it as an educational process in which learners have the primary responsibility for their own educational experiences, with or without the help of others, identifying learning needs, preparing goals, determining resources, and evaluating outcomes. Knowles

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

(1980) confirms this researcher's reflection when he says that to the extent that individuals mature, they become increasingly self-directed. Paraphrasing Knowles and making a tacit comparison between SDL and TDL, Guglielmino, Long, & Hiemstra (2004) and Kasworm (1988), cited by Long (1990), point out that SDL depends on who is in charge- who decides what should be learned, who should learn it, what methods and resources should be used, and how the success of the effort should be measured; Mocker and Spear (1982), cited by Lowry (1989), refer to the same concept, but uses the word institution instead of TDL. They say that self-directed learning situation occurs when learners--not the institution--control both the learning objectives and the means of learning. Later, Candy (1991) considers a higher level of autonomy in informal learning than in non-formal and formal learning. This researcher partially agrees with him and Tough, since the new approach to formal education, tends to leave the control of objectives and means in the hands of students; of course that this change from Teacher-directed Learning (TDL) to Student-directed Learning (SDL) demands a long time, and some progressive steps, and above all, a true desire for change from the teachers. Nowadays face to face instruction is being displaced by virtual classrooms whose contexts demands autonomy and SDL

The Use of the Blog as a Self-Directed Learning Tool

It has been lately observed how formal L2 teaching has not shown enough success in results as teachers expect. It can be deduced that this situation may be the result of insufficient input received by students in such a little time for the English course. Technological resources then can play a very important role in enhancing learner's

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

performance, specially putting them in contact with authentic and interesting readings which can be understood by having and interactive communication with them . However, the use of technological resources cannot be indiscriminate. There must be an orientation to take advantage of them. Thus, Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) suggests some patterns to be followed which lead users to success by using technology as a tool to complement what is learned in the classroom. The emergence of technology, as Warschauer (1999) notes in Warschauer and Meskill (2000) provides of 'time and place-independent' environments, for the interaction of not only one-to-one, one-to-many (teacher-students) but also many-to-one, and even many-to-many.

A blog is an example of asynchronous Internet tools, it means that the user can post and be heard not at the same time. Most blogs are personal or journalistic in nature (Godwin-Jones 2003; Ducate and Lomicka 2005) and, as such, allow students express their own opinions with a freedom that cannot be experienced in synchronous tools such as real-time discussion forums, for example.

There are some relevant studies that give evidence of the impact of blogging on students' reading. One of them is from a group of Japanese researchers in the University of Hong Kong. Tse, Yuen, Loh, Lam, and Wai worked in 2010 with a group of 1298 10-year-old fourth graders; in their research important findings are reported: 1. the proportion of students reading Chinese blogs is double that of students reading English blogs; this is not surprising since Chinese is the first language of most fourth graders in Hong Kong and English

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

is only the second. At the same time, Chinese blogs are much more accessible than English blogs for students. 2. A few primary school students have sufficiently high English reading proficiency to cope with and comprehend advanced English blogs. Song and Chan (2008) report a similar finding with Malaysian students, and they concluded that students' poor English competency lowers their readiness to participate. However, since blogging is a fairly recent and novel activity and since many English sites are very attractive, the researchers would expect to see more and more students consulting English blogs in the privacy of their own homes.

The introduction of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) in foreign language teaching and learning has grown considerably in Colombia in recent years. Arismendi, Colorado and Grajales (2011), professors of Universidad de Antioquia in Medellin, Colombia in their work *Reading Comprehension in Face-to-Face and Web-Based Modalities: Graduate Students' Use of Reading and Language Learning Strategies in EFL1 both modalities*, stated that students applied the reading strategies explicitly taught during the courses and some language learning strategies for which they did not receive any instruction. Statistical analyses to compare F to F and web-based modalities in this study demonstrated that Face to Face modality students advanced more effectively than web-based modality students. The researchers explained that the degree of familiarity students had with the platform, the limited interaction they had with the instructor and classmates, and the degree of motivation for the course could be some reasons for the lower advance of the second group.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

One more research was the one done by Cuellar (2012) who developed a research entitled *Blogging to Foster Critical Reading*, where she found that a reading blog helps students to use certain features of the critical reading strategies. In addition, the findings showed the motivation and positive attitude towards the use of blogs to do readings.

It is equally important to mention the study of reading strategies in Colombia although they have not included the use of the blog as a facilitator. Zabala (2000) in his research project *Strategies to Support High School Students' Reading Comprehension in the English Language* carried out his study in a public school in Bogota, with eleventh graders. Findings showed that the most used strategies were: 1. Studying vocabulary, 2. Analyzing the main idea, 3. Prediction, and 4. Inference.

Colombia has begun to involve the use of the blog as a facilitator of learning, but each context has its own characteristics, resources, interests and needs that make their use is unique and unrepeatable. In the case of this study the use of the blog to foster reading comprehension and self-directed learning through the use of explicit reading strategies seems to be an innovative strategy in the IE Concentración Simón Araujo school.

Research Design

This section addresses the type of study used, the context and participants, researcher's role, description of the instruments, and the data collection procedures.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Type of Study

From the use of both quantitative and qualitative data, this study is framed as under the mixed method design. Though in an action research approach due to its real purpose which was to address a local problem at the school with the aim of finding an immediate solution, as defined by Schmuck cited by Mertler (2012). Mertler also says that action research is a process by which current practice can be changed toward better practice. McLean cited by Mertler (2012) claims that reflection is an integral part of this kind of research since the researcher explores critically what to do, how to do it and the effects it has in the population involved.

Six instruments helped the researcher gathered data: (1) on-going evaluation, (2) stimulated recall, the teacher's journal, (3) questionnaires, and the teacher-researcher's blog. One pre-test and one final test were applied with the expectation to project through numerical results the findings which would have an acceptable degree of accuracy, determined by numbers and formulae, in addition to comparing data with subjective results and integrate interpretations.

Context and Participants

This research was developed in I. E. Concentracion Simon Araujo School, a public school in the city of Sincelejo, the capital of the department of Sucre, in the northern coast of Colombia. The school is spacious and comfortable, and is equipped with two computer rooms, one more room equipped with video beam, and a library equipped with computers

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

and TV . It has an optional emphasis in Computer Science, and therefore tenth and eleventh graders who choose this emphasis have intensive classes in computer science and in English applied to the computer. This project was developed with participants of these classes during the year 2012 due to their emphasis.

The population who participated in the first instrument applied in this research, a Pre-reading, was different from the rest of instruments used, since the original group, 86 students by total, attended the first classes compulsorily, and when the time went by, the group was reduced attending their own interests and needs. The other instruments applied in this research were focused on 30 students in total: 11 boys and 18 girls with an age range of 15 and 16 years old. They all speak Spanish which is their native and communicative language and English is used as their foreign language.

Researcher's role

The researcher of this project was the teacher of the subject called "English for Technology"; as a researcher she complied with some roles: an observer, an interpreter, an intermediary and a creator. From the first role, the researcher observed, listened, wrote, interpreted and highlighted important aspects of the behavior of the participants in the field. Other role assumed by the researcher was that of intermediary, and it was supposed to help participants in understanding aspects of other cultures included in some readings and experiences compared with participants in their own context. Finally, as a designer, the researcher adapted materials to fulfill needs of the participants. Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

(2002) state their vision on the action researcher's role as either objective or subjective; it is both in the sense that researcher treats oneself and participants both as subjects and objects in a process of critical reflection and self-reflection.

Ethical Considerations

There were some ethical aspects considered in this research. Voluntary participation was demonstrated because there was a clear understanding that the participants were under no obligation to work on it, but only if they felt really interested in participating. Confidentiality and anonymity were taken into account whenever participants practiced the application of the different instruments. Moreover, a quiet and comfortable place, such as the library, was chosen to administer questionnaires or interviews. Psychological and emotional harm was also considered when they appeared during the project: at the beginning, when participants were creating their blogs, the Technology teacher was invited to assist in this aspect; the different levels of English comprehension among students were solved with the right choice of peer grouping. Other factor considered was the use of the translator during the class, and permanent feedback which stimulated a growing self-confidence.

Data Collection Instruments

For the purpose of this study, data was collected by using the instruments shown on Figure 1. They were designed considering the objectives and the research question as a way to

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

guarantee triangulation and to validate research. These instruments are described below in detail.



Figure 1. Instruments of Data Collection

Pre-test

This instrument was very important for the research, since its results indicated a diagnosis on the reading comprehension level and the knowledge of some reading strategies, such as identification of main idea, secondary ideas, and summarizing.

Four readings were applied in this instrument (See Appendix A); the selection of these readings encompassed short and longer texts. The first and the second readings had one paragraph each of them, and the third and fourth readings had three paragraphs respectively. The test format consisted of five multiple choice questions with four answer options. Questions 1, 2, 4, and 5 asked for the main idea or topic, while question 3 asked for

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

a summary. This test was not an adapted version, but taken directly from its original source.

Ongoing Test

The topic dealt with identifying different types of texts such as persuasive, instructive, descriptive, or informative texts. This instrument was applied after training students in previous classes. This topic was considered important since it helped students use certain preliminary reading strategies in order to identify the type of text and its purpose. The test included four (4) different 1-paragraph readings to be classified, and was practiced in the teacher-researcher's blog (See Appendix B).

Final Test

This instrument was based on two (2) readings; the first reading had two questions and the second one, five questions. Questions 1 and 2 from reading 1 were about identifying supporting ideas, and explicit main ideas using a visual chart with added instructions explaining in which paragraph they could find the answers. In the second reading, questions 1 and 2, asked about writing main ideas from the different paragraphs and then writing a summary by using these ideas. They used a visual chart and some supporting ideas. Questions from 3 to 7 asked about main ideas and deduction of vocabulary (See Appendix C).

Stimulated recall

This instrument was used as an introspective procedure through which the ongoing evaluation answers were checked in order to find out the possible causes of mistakes. It was used immediately after having answered the ongoing test. It consisted of one oral question which was answered orally. A group of fifteen (15) students were chosen at random and

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

represented 50% of the sample population. Each student was invited to the teacher's desk where they gave their explanations regarding their answers.

Teacher's Journal

This instrument was implemented for 6 months and was used to compile the most relevant observations during the whole process including the process of implementation of the blog; furthermore, the most important insights, observations, and deductions, which emerged as product of students' activities. These journal reflections were grouped in weekly sessions, and were recorded immediately after the class (See Appendix D).

Open Ended Questionnaire 1

This questionnaire (See Appendix E) included 4 questions which had the purpose of checking the incidence of some features such as motivation, collaborative work, instructions given in each activity, and learning styles; and the relationship they had with the students' level of reading comprehension. The students' names were not written on the papers so as to give them that sense of confidence in expressing their ideas. Answers were given using L1.

Open Ended Questionnaire 2

This instrument (See Appendix F) consisted of 5 questions and was intended to evaluate students' progression in technology, collaborative work, and teacher and students' new role.

Teacher's Blog

The blog was the technological tool used in the development of this study. The students' blogs were directly supervised by the researcher from her page: www.teacher-

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

lia.blogspot.com. Guidelines were written for the students to help them create their own blogs, which allowed them to insert their pages into the teacher's blog, from where she could have permanent access to each blog and supervise their work. In order to find evidence of this work, the following links are available:

<http://www.anyi-licho.blogspot.com/>, <http://jose-urueta.blogspot.com/>, <http://jonathan-lpm.blogspot.com/> or <http://www.jharyj10.blogspot.com/>

The blog was active for eight (8) months. The work consisted of explicit instructions encompassing ten (10) tasks that focused on the following topics: 1. and 2. Netiquette; 3. Learning tips; 4. Learning strategies classification; 5. Learning styles; 6. Types of texts; 7. Reading Strategy 1: finding the main idea; 8. Reading Strategy 2: supporting ideas; 9. Placing the main idea; 10. Summarizing. The selection of these activities was as a result of direct observations of the needs of students in previous reading experiences (See Appendix G).

Data Collection Procedures

Procedures and a brief description of how each instrument was applied, important aspects such as length of application, place where they were applied, special considerations and special behaviors during the application of them are provided in this section.

Pre-test. It was applied before implementing the reading strategies. Initially, this test consisted of six (6) readings and eight (8) questions; however, it was necessary to reduce the number of readings to four (4), and the number of questions to five (5) during the practice of

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

the test, because the participants spent a long time in the readings. Question 1 was solved with the help of the teacher; so, for this study, consideration was only given to four (4) questions which were solved by them. Before students began doing the test, the teacher explained the instructions using both languages, Spanish and English. They were allowed to use dictionaries during the last fifteen minutes of the class, because they were not familiar with many words in the readings. This instrument was a print version and was practiced individually.

Ongoing evaluation. This test was completed before midyear recess period. Students worked on a task about types of texts taken from British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) virtual page on their blogs. They opened the link suggested in the teacher's blog, and then worked on it in their personal blogs. They had to take into account their previous knowledge of types of texts and some technological actions: copy, paste, convert to word document, or PDF format. In addition, they worked on creating the new page and uploading information with the help of the most advanced partners in this topic. Then each of them tried to solve the questions individually. This test lasted for one (1) hour, and students were allowed to use their dictionaries.

Stimulated recall. This instrument was introduced to clarify on-going test answers. Due to the proximity of computers in the virtual library, most of tests had similar grades. Therefore, once each student had finished working, he or she explained each of his/her answers to the teacher orally. It only took a few minutes after the on-going test. Fifteen (15)

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

of the students were questioned and the question simply asked the reasons for classifying each of the texts.

Final test. This test was taken during the ninth month of the research. It consisted of only one text which evaluated three reading strategies: identification of the main idea, supporting ideas, and summarizing. A single text was chosen for this test, considering the long time they needed to do the pre-test, and as a result, it was calculated on the basis of being answered during a one hour class; despite that the process took two hours. They worked individually with the photocopied material, and received instructions in English and Spanish. They were given permission to use Google translator and to ask the teacher any question. The exam took place in the virtual library.

Teacher's journal. This instrument was the most valuable tool to analyze data qualitatively. Journaling began from the start of the research and lasted eight (8) months. Observations and reflections were grouped by weeks, since the class practiced once a week. This data was transcribed on the computer from some key words the researcher had noted during the class, and then organized as complete ideas by the researcher. This procedure focused on the observation of the management of the reading strategies as well as the self-directed learning through the different classes. After having completed the writings, all these comments were codified, and then important patterns came out: motivation, scaffolding, vocabulary constraints, honesty, collaborative work, and cognitive background. The data analysis will explain them in greater detail.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Open ended questionnaires 1 and 2. These two instruments followed the same procedures: Photocopied papers were handed out to be solved during free time when fifteen (15) students from the sample population were invited to work in the library. They worked freely, keeping their anonymity, and writing their thoughts individually and using L1. They spent twenty (20) minutes on this activity. Most importantly, the purpose of these questionnaires was to look for their self-directed learning knowledge and practice.

Teacher's blog. The blog was the first instrument applied systematically during the project research. The first issues had to do with creating students' personal blogs, uploading their photos and videos. General management was done in small groups. Then during the development of the different tasks, the procedure was basically the same: creating their own pages, reading of instructions, following of the different steps in the class, collaborative work, and socialization. The purpose of this instrument was mainly to make explicit the reading strategies mentioned above and to teach students how to follow instructions to reach a good level of autonomy and self-directed learning. The Students were allowed to ask and share information, and to use their dictionaries; and finally, they had to do their own tasks in their blogs.

With the objective of following an order and fulfill some dates, the researcher planned a timeline (See Appendix G) which acted as a guide to distribute the application of instruments and the analysis of data.

Validation of Instruments

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

With the aim of establishing a degree of reliability in this project, eight (8) instruments were used for data collection, which were analyzed, six (6) of them (ongoing evaluation, stimulated recall, teacher's journal, 2 open ended questionnaires, and students' blogs) in a qualitative way; and two (2) others were analyzed quantitatively (pre-test, and final test).

Additionally, inter reliability was applied in some instruments, such as tests, which sought the assistance of other teachers, and applied in stimulated recall when used to compare the data collected in the Ongoing test. The researcher applied quantitative formulas which yielded many interesting facts that could be compared with observations from the qualitative analysis. The validity of this work could be measured in the applicability which should be implemented at all levels of the institution. Moreover, it can provide guidance in solving problems of a similar nature in other institutions in the future.

Data Analysis and Results

Within this section a complete interpretation of the data collected and an analysis of these findings have been presented in order to address the research question; Additionally, other findings emerged which, although they were not related to the research question of this project, they were still considered important to begin a new study.

In order to organize the instruments used and the participants involved, it was necessary to make use of some conventional signs. The instruments were codified using

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

these letters: 1. Pre-test= P; 2. On-going test=OT; 3. Stimulated Recall=SR; 4. Final test=FT; 5. Questionnaire 1=Q1; 6. Questionnaire 2=Q2; 7. Teacher's journal=MJ; 8. Teacher's Blog=MB. The participants were identified using numbers, according to their responses in each instrument analysed, without taking care if he/she was the same one who participated in any other instrument data analysis. Example: S1-S2-S3-S4-S5 up to S30. Similarly, the researcher who wrote insights in the journal was identified with letter T. There was also an organizational chart with the number of interventions for each of the instruments as well as the dates for each intervention (See Appendix G). Each of these interventions required a previous lesson plan which allowed the teacher to properly develop the activities. These plans were done according to a template from the Lesson Plan Template provided by Universidad de La Sabana, an adapted template from Dr. Joan Rubin's Lesson Planner, ICELT lesson plan template and Weekly Planner 2012-02 Department of Languages and Cultures, Universidad de La Sabana (See appendix H). Also a previous timeline was designed so as to fulfill all the necessary requirements within the agreed time frame (See Appendix J).

Pre-test.

This test was administered to the whole groups of students in the tenth and eleventh grades who attended classes on May 15th, 2012: Fifty (50) from the tenth grade and thirty six (36) from the eleventh. For the purpose of the analysis, they were divided into two groups: students who continued attending "Technology in English" class who were called group 1; and the remainder of the students who only attended English classes, but decided not to continue with "Technology in English" classes 2. It was done with the purpose of comparing

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

their initial abilities, in order to detect any possible advantage some students would have over others. From Table 1, where mean scores from both groups appear, we could deduce the following ideas: 1. Group 2 showed a low level of reading comprehension. 2. The boys from group 2 showed the lowest level of Reading comprehension. 3. The girls from Group 1 have a similar level of the Participant group

Table 1: results of the pre-test

Grade	Group 1		Group 2	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
10A	3	9	11	3
Mean	2.3	2.5	1.2	2.3
10B	5	2	13	4
Mean	2.8	4	2.3	3.25
11 th	3	7	19	7
Mean	2.6	2	2.5	2.7
Total Mean	2.56	2.83	2.0	2.75

To effectively compare the results of pre-test and final test, which were the two instruments that were analyzed quantitatively, consideration was given to 19 out of the 30 students in Group 1. These participants represented 63% of the group population. From this analysis (See Table 2), it can be concluded that group 1 passed the test: 2.5 out of 4 which was the

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

total number of questions considered in the test. However most of the students had a slightly higher score of 3. The standard deviation also showed a very close relationship between the different scores: 0.64. The greatest difficulty in this test was the lack of vocabulary and this weakness was a handicap in showing good management of reading comprehension.

Ongoing evaluation

Only one (1) student answered all the questions correctly. The other twenty nine (29) students had difficulty with the informative and descriptive texts. Quantitative results (See table 3) show a mean of 2.1 which represents a generally low performance, as the standard deviation shows a minimum with respect to the mean.

Table 2: pretest: descriptive statistics

N	X(four questions)	Mean	D	D ²
1 (boys)	3		0.4	0.16
2	3		0.4	0.16
3	2		-0.6	0.36
4	3		0.4	0.16
5	2		-0.6	0.36
6 (girls)	1		-1.6	2.56
7	3		0.4	0.16
8	3		0.4	0.16
9	3		0.4	0.16
10	2		-0.6	0.36
11	3	2.5	0.4	0.16
12	2		-0.6	0.36
13	3		0.4	0.16
14	3		0.4	0.16
15	3		0.4	0.16
16	3		0.4	0.16
17	2		-0.6	0.36
18	3		0.4	0.16
19	2		-0.6	0.36
48			7.44	

$$\text{Mean} = 48/19 = 2.5$$

$$\text{Median} = 2$$

$$\text{Mode} = 3$$

$$\text{Range} = 1 \text{ to } 3$$

$$s = \sqrt{7.4/18} = 0.64$$

$$s^2 = 0.4$$

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Table 3: Ongoing MC Test

N	X(four questions)	Mean	D	D ²
1 (boys)	4		1.9	3.6
2	4		1.9	3.6
3	2		-0.1	0.01
4	2		-0.1	0.01
5	2		-0.1	0.01
6	2		-0.1	0.01
7	2		-0.1	0.01
8	2		-0.1	0.01
9	2		-0.1	0.01
10	2		-0.1	0.01
11	2		-0.1	0.01
12	2		-0.1	0.01
13	2		-0.1	0.01
14	2		-0.1	0.01
15	2		-0.1	0.01
16	2	2.1	-0.1	0.01
17	2		-0.1	0.01
18	2		-0.1	0.01
19 (girls)	2		-0.1	0.01
20	2		-0.1	0.01
21	2		-0.1	0.01
22	2		-0.1	0.01
23	2		-0.1	0.01
24	2		-0.1	0.01
25	2		-0.1	0.01
26	2		-0.1	0.01
27	2		-0.1	0.01
28	2		-0.1	0.01
29	2		-0.1	0.01
30	2		-0.1	0.01
	64			7.48

Mean=62/30= 2.1 Median= 3 Mode= 2 Range= 2 to 4 $S=\sqrt{7.48/29}= 0.5$ $S^2= 0.25$

Final test

This test was taken by 30 students in total: twelve (12) girls and eighteen (18) boys. The test (See Appendix C) was composed by three (3) “why” questions whose answers could be found in reading 1; a line of events to be completed with 2 main ideas found in reading 2 and a writing of the summary of this reading; and finally, a set of 5 multiple choice questions. In this final test, there were six (6) essay questions and five (5) multiple choice questions which were considered. Statistical results regarding essay questions (See Table 4) show that

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

the group got an acceptable mean of 3.6 over 6. We can also observe that the mode of 5 is a very good performance of most of the students. However, there is a very long distance from this mode to three of the participants who got the lowest score of 0.

Table 4: Final Test Essay Part

N	X(six questions)	Mean	D	D ²	Z _x
1 (boys)	5		1.4	2	0.7
2	5		1.4	2	0.7
3	0		-3.6	13	-1.7
4	1		-2.6	6.8	-1.2
5	6		2.4	5.8	1.1
6	0		-3.6	13	-1.7
7	5		1.4	2	0.7
8	4		0.4	0.2	0.2
9	1		-2.6	6.8	-1.2
10	0		-3.6	13	-1.7
11	3		-0.6	0.36	-0.3
12	6		2.4	5.8	1.1
13	2		-1.6	2.6	-0.8
14	3		-0.6	0.36	-0.3
15	4		0.4	0.2	0.2
16	4	3.6	0.4	0.2	0.2
17	6		2.4	5.8	1.1
18	6		2.4	5.8	1.1
19 (girls)	5		1.4	2	0.7
20	1		-2.6	6.8	-1.2
21	5		1.4	2	0.7
22	1		-2.6	6.8	-1.2
23	4		0.4	0.2	0.2
24	2		-1.6	2.6	-0.8
25	4		0.4	0.2	0.2
26	2		-1.6	2.6	-0.8
27	6		2.4	5.8	1.1
28	5		1.4	2	0.7
29	6		2.4	5.8	1.1
30	5		1.4	2	0.7
Total	107			124.52	-0.4

Mean=107/30= 3.6

Median= 3 Mode= 5 Range= 0 to 6 $S = \sqrt{124.52/29} = 2.1$ $S^2 = 4.2$

In the second part of the final test, the multiple choice section, (See Table 5), the performance was not as good as in the previous one, as indicated by the mean of 3.1, but it is

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

considered a part of the qualitative range of “acceptable”. When the standard deviation for both types of test was analyzed, it was observed that in the MC test the most of the scores were closer to the mean (1.38) than in the essay test (2.1). It showed two things: this kind of test was easier to solve, or on the other hand, it was an opportunity to cheat, which was most likely, due to the proximity of the desks in this room.

Table 5: Final Test MC Answers

N	X(five questions)	Mean	D	D ²	Z _y
1 (boys)	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
2	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
3	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
4	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
5	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
6	1		-2.1	4.4	-1.52
7	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
8	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
9	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
10	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
11	0		-3.1	9.6	-2.24
12	2		-1.1	1.2	-0.8
13	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
14	5		1.9	3.6	1.4
15	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
16	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
17	2	3.1	-1.1	1.2	-0.8
18	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
19 (girls)	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
20	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
21	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
22	3		-0.1	0.01	-0.07
23	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
24	0		-3.1	9.6	-2.24
25	5		1.9	3.6	1.4
26	0		-3.1	9.6	-2.24
27	2		-1.1	1.2	-0.8
28	2		-1.1	1.2	-0.8
29	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
30	4		0.9	0.8	0.65
92				55.67	-0.68
Mean=92/30= 3.1 Median= 2 Mode= 4 Range= 0 to 5 $S=\sqrt{55.67/29}= 1.38$ $S^2= 1.9$					

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Regarding Pearson's correlation (See Table 6), to measure reliability and validity between the two different scale tests, we can observe that the result value of 0.01 is between the accepted range of -1 to 1; However, it shows a very weak correlation.

Table 6. Pearson's Correlation coefficient

$$R_{xy} = \frac{\sum(Z_x Z_y)}{n-1}$$

$$R_{xy} = \frac{\sum(0.4 \times 0.68)}{29} = 0.01$$

Results analysis, considering both the boys and girls performance, showed that boys and girls had a similar behavior, 67% of each group passed, in the essay test, while in the MC test, 78% of the boys over 67% of girls had a good performance.

With respect to the analysis of the MC test (See Table 7), it can be concluded that the five items were well constructed, as it was demonstrated by the item facility results, which included all the results in the range from 0.37 to 0.77. The performance of students with lower and higher scores relating to the item discrimination has a logical sense in items 2, 3, 4 and 5. Item 1 had a strange performance, as students with lower scores attained better scores.

The more detailed analysis of the response frequency distribution highlights this important observation: the lower result group of students worked with an average of 50%, and the other half of them did not mark any option.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Table 7: Analysis for the MC Test

Item	Number of Ss Who answered correctly	I.F	High Scores (8) With Correct Answers	Low Scores (8) With Correct Answers	I.D. H.S/L.S*	Response Frequency Distribution			
						A	B	C	D
1	11	0.37	2	4	-0.25	5	1	2*	0
						1	0	4	1
2	16	0.53	8	0	1	0	8*	0	0
						0	0	2	2
3	22	0.73	8	1	0.9	8*	0	0	0
						1	2	0	0
4	23	0.77	8	4	0.5	0	0	0	8*
						0	0	0	4
5	19	0.63	8	0	1	0	8*	0	0
						3	0	0	1

As

basically 1. Supporting ideas and 2. Summarizing, they were tested in the first part of the test by means of an essay, which had six (6) questions. The second part of the test, which used 5 multiple choice questions, asked for explicit information in the readings, and deduction of vocabulary.

From information in table 4, data shows that eighteen students (60%) showed a good management of reading strategies, because they answered four or more questions correctly;

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Two students (7%) reached a fair level in the management of these strategies; and 10 students (33%) did not reach a good management of them.

Stimulated recall

In order to comprehend the following comments, it is essential to have the readings from the on-going test, which was the instrument to be considered. The purpose of this instrument was to know exactly which of the students answered questions based on their understanding of Types of texts, or, on the contrary, based on cheating. Only one (1) student knew exactly which kind of text was being referred to when talking about informative text; he said, "If we observe text 1, "it was raining since I arrived", there are two kinds of times: the word "raining" is describing weather time; but the phrase "since I arrived" means that it has been a while since he came to this point when he is speaking, it is chronological time. The rest of the students, although having chosen the correct answer, could not explain their choices.

Teacher's journal

This was perhaps the core instrument for qualitative data related to how students raised their self-direction in language learning. There are some important conclusions that emerged from the journal entries during the long term it was carried out. All the data collected was compiled in a document to find patterns. After this step, the researcher condensed the information into categories based on the literature review about how to foster reading comprehension and self-directed learning through the use of explicit reading strategies and a blog.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

These were the most relevant observations: 1. the role of the teacher, who, through the use of dialogue, avoided emotional clash between old and new students. So once the teacher made them aware of it they were invited to have a collaborative spirit. 2. The collaborative work from the teachers 'team produced good results in the students 'work. (Supporting idea from the journal, February 5 to 10) 3. Regarding why students did not work, it was due to more personal supporting being needed from the students from the teacher, and as a result, their motivation increased. (Supporting idea from March 12 to 15) 4. Motivation increased with the use of technology (March 12-15) 5. They had difficulties in following instructions and working by themselves, as they were accustomed to being guided by the teacher (supporting idea from March 25) 6. Tenth grade students were always more interested than eleventh grade students in technology from the beginning, and this was demonstrated by the number of students from this grade who updated and worked the blogs 7. It was difficult to work technology from home because of the lack of resources. 8. Authenticity in works was very hard to achieve, as they were used to practicing the culture of cheating, or cutting and pasting. (April 9) 9. Students needed reasons as it related to the teacher's actions to understand and improve their behavior (May 10).

Open questionnaire 1

The following data indicates the most important answers to questions formulated regarding motivation when using the blog, use of the computer, and instructions to work

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

self-directed learning. These answers were carefully categorized according to their similarity and frequency.

There were some interesting responses to question 1: *Do you feel motivated to use the blog? Why?* Some replies:

S1. *"Yes, because it is very funny and besides, we learn new things and live a new experience with every task".*

S2. *"Yes, because I can learn more and enhance my Knowledge, I did not know things, and I can advance faster ..."*

S3. *"I feel very motivated with this new way of learning (...) work in English on the Internet and enriching my vocabulary ..."*

S4. *"(...) being able to work with pleasure, and not just to do important things, the important thing is knowing how to do them"*

S5. *"(...) it is something personal that I can give it my own style. I love it". We can see through these responses that motivation began growing by the use of personal blogs.*

To question 2: *What has been your contribution to teamwork? Do you think you're doing okay? What should be improved?* There were answers like these ones below:

S1. *"I work well but I get distracted with other things and then I do not understand what my friend is explaining"*

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

S2. *"... I have to work at improving my flexibility to accept authoritarianism and disordered peers"*

S3. *"... I must work more on helping some lazy partners and give them a hand"*

S4. *"... I need to improve on some things such as being as shy and stay away"*

S5. *"... Sharing the computer and not fighting for it". Here they showed some important values which were working better, such as, attention, tolerance, respect, collaboration, and sharing.*

To question 3, *Name three actions that you did not know of when you worked on the computer*, they answered:

S1. *"Creating my own page in English, doing my tasks and posting them, decorating and uploading videos and photos"*

S2. *"Knowing myself a little more-through the activities I do"*

S3. *"I have learned to write better, because I have more vocabulary"*

S4. *"Make god use of netiquettes".*

S5. *"Learn English in a funny way and share tasks with my friends virtually".*

Through these answers, students recognized basically the same goals proposed by the teacher at the beginning of this course: autonomy, self-direction, vocabulary improvement,

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

correct use of netiquette, and the most important, considered the act of studying as a fun and relaxing action.

To question 4: *The instructions that appear on each task, why are they important to you?* Answers written were:

S1. *"Because when somebody teaches step by step, reading and practicing, I change my way of studying".*

S2. *"Because it is a guide to do my tasks faster"*

S3. *"Because I can extend what I am doing". These answers showed important insights: there is a necessity to lead students' activity with a previous model or sample from the teacher in order for them to be further independent and practical.*

Finally, to question 5: *Since you know what your learning style is, which new strategy have you implemented for studying? What do you need to implement?* They answers were:

S1. *"I practice visual and kinesthetic; I need to work more on aural"*

S2. *"I have learned that when I am in the classroom, I can move myself a little, because I have a kinesthetic style". From these answers, they showed a new learning of what a student good behavior in class should be: not necessarily quiet and still all the time, but also to be active and relaxed.*

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Open questionnaire 2

This second open questionnaire was taken just before midyear recess. There were basically five (5) questions which intended to know their progress with the use of technology, the blog, and their self-directed learning. Again, the researcher categorized answers according to their frequency and similarity.

The questions were: How has your relationship been with 1) technology 2) English and the contents of the blog 3) collaborative work 4) the teacher 5) themselves as students.

Some answers to question 1 were:

S1. "Right now my relationship with technology has greatly increased since we are working hard lately with browsers, blog entries and much more"

S2." I still mess with some types of texts, but my relationship with technology has improved"

S3." before I was always lost. I did not understand what the teacher wanted us to do, but thanks to the instructions from the teacher I see that nothing is too big for me. And if I do not understand something, I ask".

From these answers it can be deduced the importance of giving explicit instructions via oral and written means, before each of the tasks is undertaken.

With respect to question 2, they answered:

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

S1. " my relationship with English is at a very good stage, because I hardly need a dictionary or translator to understand a dialogue or paragraph, although it is somewhat advanced. I have some flaws that I am working on. I'm studying a lot more to be the most outstanding student in the classroom."

S2. " I am very excited because with each passing day I am learning, improving in a new language, which helps me to face the future. Sometimes I feel bad because I do not understand some issues; however, I have a lot of enthusiasm to get ahead."

From these answers the researcher noticed a good attitude and disposition from students towards English learning; however, in the reality it seemed not to be so flattering.

To question 3, they answered:

S1. "The relationship in a group is more or less remote because I like to do things alone"

S2. "My relationship with the group work is good, because if I do not understand something, I ask my partner or vice versa".

S3. "My relationship with the group is good although there are some times when I want to finish quickly and do not want to help anybody. I like to finish it alone, so I tell them to copy and I focus only on doing my job."

The researcher observed that some of them liked to work in groups and others liked to work alone, taking into account the different learning styles. Additionally, they worked in

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

groups; they felt more confident and respectful. It was also noticed that by this time they were really helping each other without rivalries.

Most relevant answers to question 4 were:

S1. "I love how she explains. It is expressed in a way that students understand".

S2. "She has awakened in me a super great interest to continue studying English".

The researcher thinks that keeping a continuous dialogue and feedback with them, was the successful key, because there was that awareness among the students of a clear consciousness of the teacher role as a close adviser and guide, and their role as knowledge builders.

As to Question 5, these were some answers:

S1. "I have improved as a student; I study more because I want to learn more".

S2. "Before I was undisciplined and you advised me and now I'm not undisciplined."

S3. "I have improved because before now, I was a student with many problems".

My blog

In order to examine the blog writing task, the main data from this supporting tool was drawn from examples of content as posted by the students on their academic blogs over the course of seven (7) months, but mostly, by the direct observation from the teacher and

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

written in the journal immediately after class. This data from the blog was categorized and analyzed qualitatively, including the on-going test which was done using this tool.

Within this section, it has been highlighted some important ideas during the blog management, which was divided in three steps: opening, pre-tasks, and core tasks.

Opening (From week 1 in My Journal).

“1. Students were initially afraid of the unknown things, which was reflected in the handling of the e-blog, and in their reaction, which was rejection. 2. Social Worker and Coordinators were included in the motivating process. 3. Collaboration from adventurous students in the use of computers was crucial to the inclusion of most of the others in the work. 4. The teacher talked to them about the importance of collaborative work without rivalry or jealousy. 5. The teacher delimited the final sample group: 30 students from 11th and 10th grades who attended Technology in English class, because the larger initial group from eleventh and Tenth grades was not interested in this project, and they gave different excuses such as lack of internet at home. (See statistical analyses on Table D) 6. A new virtual classroom with a faster network was assigned for this project”.

Pre tasks (from week 8 in My Journal).

“Students now have the expertise in handling the blog mechanics. 2. Personalized checking and feedback improved their performance 3. They have some difficulty in reading and understanding different visual texts, as they are reading about different learning styles.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

4. They have difficulties in understanding and following instructions in English, so it was necessary to include an induction on how to deduct or search for the meaning of key words to help understand the entire sentence without having to translate all the text literally. 5. When practicing readings and tests, they always have difficulties with their lack of vocabulary 6. They were obligated to fulfill their home tasks as a pre requisite to attend classes. 7. They were assigned in a pair group where they could balance their understanding and collaboration”.

Core Tasks. “It is important to mention some relevant observations about the first reading strategy: explicit and implicit information. 1. Students were very motivated because the link used for this purpose, had a lot of interactive exercises. 2. They understood the two concepts easily, although it was a possibility they had more difficulties when identifying implicit information, and not with the suggested exercises, as in the case of when the teacher asked some comprehension questions about the set of readings they chose. For example, in the reading about the circulatory system, they said that the heart had resembled their fist size, and when they were asked, “how big is your heart?” they were not able to answer. A similar doubt happened when they were asked, “If this is your skull, how big is your brain?” despite having read that the brain is positioned in the upper half of the skull”. You can find some more interesting analysis about reading strategies in the teacher’s journal. The last strategy we worked on, it was on writing their own summaries about previous readings. Perhaps, it was the most difficult strategy that we practiced, because it was hard for them to find the main idea of each paragraph. Most of the time, as is known, it is placed at the

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

beginning of a paragraph, but not all the time. In this regard, they had to find it, because they know it is the idea that relates to the most of the others are speaking about. Sometimes, they were confused with a secondary idea which was referring to a different topic; however, they spent a lot of time doing different summaries from various types of news taken from some recommended newspapers and magazines.

Categories

Categories and subcategories were considered from some different aspects such as, question research, other questions, objectives, hypothesis, and theory. (Some constructs were involved in research question aspects).

Table 8: Categories and subcategories considered in this study

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
“How can a group of eleventh and tenth grade students improve the reading comprehension level through the use of explicit reading strategies and a blog which empower their self-directed learning?”	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Background knowledge (Reading Strategy) 2. Collaborative work. (SDL) 3. Vocabulary acquisition (Reading Strategy) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Students have trouble with some theory to distinguish different types of texts.(SR:S1-S2) 2.1 Collaborative work should begin from the teachers’ team. (MJ:T) 2.2 Students improved their shyness and laziness working together. (Q1:S3-S4) 2.3 The practice of collaborative work, makes them feel confident and respectful (MJ: T) 2.4 Advantageous students help is crucial to avoid rejection, and their help becomes spontaneous (MJ:T) 3.1 The handle of a wider vocabulary, improve their reading comprehension (Q1:S3) 3.2 The frequently use of same instructions and vocabulary makes them diminish the use of dictionary (Q2:S1) 3.3 it is not necessary to know the meaning of each word to deduce the meaning of ideas, and with training the learn how to deduce meanings. (MJ:T)

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
	4. Inference and Implicit information (Reading Strategies) 5. Technology 6. Scaffolding (SDL)	4. Implicit information and inference need more training than explicit observation (MJ:T) 5.1 Students can share tasks with friends virtually (Q1:S7) 5.2 When they make progress in the use of technology, they feel motivated to work. (MJ:T) 6.1 All activities need to be guided with previous models or samples in order them to get further autonomy (Q1:S8) 6.2 Instructions improve their understanding, and better if they are written. (Q2:S2)
What kind of student's learning style helps for a better reading comprehension?		Visual, kinesthetic, aural and reading were used in a balance amount in order them to know each of the styles, and adopt the most appropriate according to the test practiced to detect their learning style
Do students implement new learning strategies once they know about their predominant learning style?		It was not observed
Does the good management of technology influence over a better reading comprehension?		Yes, it was demonstrated
Objectives: To make students aware of the use of reading strategies to raise their comprehensive level.		The data collected and analyzed demonstrated that students improved their reading comprehension through the explicit knowledge of some reading strategies.
To examine the role the blog has to improve reading comprehension		It was positively proved
Construct 1: Reading comprehension ideas	1. behavior	1.1 Discipline in class is better if we give them reasons and explanations of decisions. (MJ:T)
Construct 2: Tasks	1. Timing 2. cheating	1.1 Timing should be flexible, according to students needs and characteristics. MJ:T 2.1 Students need to work honesty to work with technological tools. MJ:T
Other findings	1. Role of the teacher	1.1 the teacher should have values such as tenacity to solve different constraints in the way, and not to reject; and conciliating

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

		sprit in order to lead adolescents to work without rivalry and selfish
--	--	--

Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications

For this teacher-researcher, it is satisfactory to see how the results shown are the evidence on how the research strategy was thoroughly tested through various instruments used. Positive aspects can be mentioned from the findings, such as collaborative work and scaffolding which are strategies that foster self- directed learning. It was demonstrated that these two aspects improved throughout constant practice.

With respect to reading strategies, some progress was made with the explicit teaching of some of them. However, the school year calendar and the amount of time needed to train students on the strategies took longer than the time considered for the study. The strategy which demanded more effort from the students was *summarizing*; but it is important to note that there were two activities which influenced all the activities: 1. Vocabulary deduction and 2. The management and understanding of implicit information. These activities should be practiced systematically in all reading exercises which are planned at the school. It is also important to note that if strategies are reinforced in other courses as a cross curricular strategy would strengthen the students' background and previous knowledge.

This study showed that the explicit teaching of reading strategies improved students' performance; but beyond that, it was possible to know the difficulty that students experienced applying each strategy, what new activities they implemented in their learning

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

style, and what aspects of teacher contributed to a better understanding.

With respect to the question of the influence of learning styles on reading comprehension, it can be concluded that by direct observation alone, the conscious use of different styles acts as a motivating aspect to the acquisition of the habit of reading. However, it is necessary to include different types of learning styles in different teaching materials, until students, through repeated practice, express their preference for one style or other (s) that favor (s) their reading comprehension.

With regard to the question of whether students apply different learning strategies learned, this observation was not carried out in this project.

In relation to the question on whether the good management of technology improves reading comprehension, it can be said that it surely does, not only in reading texts, but through pictures that complement and expand text comprehension. In addition, blog management, allowed students to use a personal design that cause them to read. Also it allowed different sources to feed their vision and analysis, and they facilitated interactivity which allowed immediate and motivating feedback.

In the construct of reading comprehension, having demonstrated important aspects such as vocabulary acquisition, background knowledge, and metacognitive control, it is important to refer to one aspect called "giving reasons". This aspect calls teachers' attention to be able to explain students the reasons for certain teaching decisions and procedures; so

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

that, they would be aware of the teachers' movements and have insights which benefit them. As a result, they would improve their behavior and become more helpful.

Finally, through the comparison of this study results with some previous studies, mentioned in previous sections, it is important to say that it is evident the direct relationship between motivation towards reading and the use of tasks; and the direct relationship between reading comprehension and reading interests. As to the use of blogs, the student-participants showed an initial resistance to the use of them because of their lack of technological skill; but after some practice, they felt very confident with the blog and enjoyed working with them.

This study intends to serve first as a motivator for all teachers in the area of English to implement the use of teaching blogs and reading strategies. And also to implement these reading strategies as a parallel activity that may be institutionalized and developed in stages, so as to start evidencing positive advancement in the near future.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

References

- Arismendi Gómez, F. A., Colorado López, D., & Grajales Marín, L. F. (2011). Reading Comprehension in Face-to-Face and Web-Based Modalities: Graduate Students' Use of Reading and Language Learning Strategies in EFL. *Colombian Applied Linguistics Journal*, 13(2), 11-28.
- Atweh, B. Kemmis, S. & Weeks, P. (2002). *Action Research in Practice: Partnership for Social Justice in Education*. London:UK. Taylor & Francis e-library.
- Candy, P. C. (1991). *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning. A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*. Jossey-Bass, 350 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94104-1310.
- Cuellar, E (2012). Blogging to foster critical reading. Retrieved from <http://intellectum.unisabana.edu.co:8080/jspui/bitstream/10818/6669/1/ELIZABETH%20CUELLAR%20%28T%29.pdf>
- Ducate, L. C., & Lomicka, L. L. (2005). Exploring the blogosphere: use of web logs in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign language annals*, 38(3), 410-421.
- Ellinger, A. D. (2004). The concept of self-directed learning and its implications for human resource development. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 6(2), 158-177.
- Garrison, D. R. (2003). Self-directed learning and distance education. *Handbook of distance education*, 161-168.
- Godwin-Jones, R. (2003). Emerging technologies. *Language Learning & Technology*, 7(2), 12-16.
- Grabe, W. (2009). *Reading in a second language: moving from theory to practice*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Guglielmino, L. M., Long, H. B., & Hiemstra, R. (2004). Self-direction in learning in the United States. *International Journal of Self-Directed Learning*, 1(1), 1-17.
- Gunning, T. (2010). *Reading Comprehension Boosters*. (pp 39-42, 142, 143, 196, 197) San Francisco: CA. Josey Bass.
- Harvey, S. & Goudvis, A. (2000). *Strategies that work: Teaching comprehension to enhance*. Stenhouse Publishers.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

- King, S. (n.d) Did I read it or not? *Bacon Learning Center*. Retrieved from <http://www.beaconlearningcenter.com/WebLessons/DidIRead/info01.htm>
- Knowles, M. S. (1975). *Self-directed learning*. New York: Association Press.
- Long, H. B. (1990). Psychological control in self-directed learning. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 9(4), 331-338.
- Lowry, C. M. (1989). *Supporting and facilitating self-directed learning*. ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education.
- Mertler, C. A. (2012). *Action Research: Improving Schools and Empowering Educators*. Sage.
- O'Malley, J. & Chamot, A. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. Cambridge: UK. Cambridge University Press.
- Pressley, M & Afflerbach, P. (1995). *Verbal protocols of reading: the nature of constructively responsive reading*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Retrieved from <http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire>
- Reynard, R. (2007). Hybrid learning: Challenges for teachers. *The Journal*.
- Snow, C. (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward an R&D program in reading comprehension*. Rand Corporation.
- Tankersley, K. (2003). *The threads of reading: Strategies for literacy development*. Ma: USA. ASCD.
- Tse, S. K., Yuen, A. H. K., Loh, E. K. Y., Lam, J. W. I., & Ng, R. H. W. (2010). The impact of blogging on Hong Kong primary school students' bilingual reading literacy. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 26(2), 164-179.
- Warschauer, M., & Meskill, C. (2000). Technology and second language teaching. *Handbook of undergraduate second language education*, 303-318.
- Yale, J B. (2008). The relationship between reading and writing. Retrieved from <http://www.k12reader.com/the-relationship-between-reading-and-writing/>
- Zabala, F. O. (2004). Strategies to support high school students' reading comprehension in the English language. *Profile: Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 5(7), 98-108.
- Zimmerman, S., & Hutchins, C. (2003). Seven keys to comprehension: How to help your kids read it and get it. *New York: Three Rivers*.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendices

Appendix A: Pretest (1 of 3)

INSTITUCION EDUCATIVA CONCENTRACION SIMON ARAUJO
SINCELEJO-COLOMBIA
READING COMPREHENSION- PRETEST

STUDENT: _____ TEACHER: LIA MONTALVO

OBJECTIVE: THE STUDENTS WILL APPLY THREE SPECIFIC READING STRATEGIES TO ASSESS THE LEVEL OF DOMAIN THAT THEY HAVE OF THEM TO READ SUCESSFULLY

Snake Killer

The mongoose is a champion fighter. It hunts and kills snakes, even poisonous ones. The mongoose is very fast. When a snake tries to strike the mongoose, the mongoose leaps out of its way and jumps on the back of the snake's neck. Then it bites into the snake's neck and kills it.

1. This paragraph is mostly about
 - a. A snake's enemies.
 - b. how mongooses kill snakes.
 - c. where mongooses are found.
 - d. how fast mongooses are.

The Hornbill Alarm Clock

Like most other birds, the hornbill wakes up early. It flies over to where the mongoose is sleeping. It calls the mongoose. First, it calls softly. But then it calls louder. It keeps on calling until the mongoose wakes up. The hornbill is an alarm clock with wings.

1. This paragraph is mostly about
 - a. why birds wake up early.
 - b. what alarm clocks do.
 - c. why the mongoose sleeps later than the hornbill.
 - d. how the hornbill is like an alarm clock.

How Dogs Help Disabled People

Dogs can help disabled people in many ways. A guide dog becomes the eyes for a blind person. It helps its owner get from place to place. A hearing ear dog alerts its owner when it hears certain sounds. A mobility-assist dog becomes its owner's helping hands. It helps its owner by picking up objects and bringing them to its owner. It picks up objects that the owner has dropped or can't reach. It can also pull its owner's wheelchair, carry things in a backpack, and open and close doors. It can even help its owner get dressed. Dogs that assist disabled people are known as service dogs.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix A: Pretest (2 of 3)

1. Circle the letter of the best summary.

- a. Dogs can help disabled people in many ways. Dogs that assist disabled people are known as service dogs.
- b. Service dogs can help disabled people in many ways. Guide dogs help the blind. Hearing ear dogs help the deaf. Mobility-assist dogs help people who can't get around or do things for themselves.
- c. Service dogs can help disabled people in many ways. Guide dogs help the blind. Hearing ear dogs help the deaf. Mobility-assist dogs help people who can't get around or do things for themselves. A mobility-assist dog becomes its owner's helping hands. It helps its owner in many ways. It helps its owner by picking up objects and bringing them to its owner. It picks up objects that the owner has dropped or can't reach. It can also pull its owner's wheelchair, carry things in a backpack, and open and close doors. It can even help its owner get dressed.

Hearing Ear Dogs

1

The smoke alarm goes off, but Tyrique (TIE-reek) doesn't hear it. Tyrique lost his hearing twenty years ago when he was just four years old. A light attached to the smoke alarm starts flashing. Tyrique doesn't see it. He is sound asleep. But Candy hears it. Candy is a hearing ear dog. Candy dashes to Tyrique and begins tugging on his pajamas. Smelling smoke, Tyrique leaps out of bed. The house is on fire. Because of Candy, Tyrique is able to get out of the house in time.

2

What Hearing Ear Dogs Do

You can probably guess what hearing ear dogs do. They help people who have hearing difficulties. Hearing ear dogs are sometimes known as signal dogs. The dogs are trained to let their owners know when certain sounds are heard. The dogs can be trained to respond to certain sounds such as a smoke detector, a doorbell, a phone ringing, a baby crying, a car horn, or a fire truck siren. They can even be trained to alert their owners when someone calls the owner's name or when someone is trying to break into the owner's home.

3

Dogs That Make Good Hearing Ear Dogs

Not every dog can be a hearing ear dog. Hearing ear dogs need to be lively and alert. Dogs that just like to lie around might not pay attention to sounds or might not run to their owners when they hear the sounds. Hearing ear dogs must also be friendly. A dog that doesn't like to be around people wouldn't make a good hearing ear dog.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix A: Pretest (3 of 3)

1. Paragraph 2 is mostly about
 - a. who needs hearing ear dogs.
 - b. how to care for hearing ear dogs.
 - c. how hearing ear dogs help people.
 - d. how to get a hearing ear dog.

2. Paragraph 3 is mostly about
 - a. what kinds of dogs make good hearing ear dogs.
 - b. where trainers get good hearing ear dogs.
 - c. why dogs like to help people.
 - d. where people can go to get hearing ear dogs.

Read the paragraph, and then answer the questions that follow it.

Young Helper

You don't have to be old to help others. In April 1995, when he was just twelve years old, Craig Kielburger was looking for the comics section in the newspaper. A story about a boy by the name of Iqbal Masih caught his eye. Iqbal Masih, who lived in Pakistan, had been forced to work long days in a factory that made rugs. He had worked twelve-hour days, six days a week from the time he was four years old until he escaped. His job was to tie tiny knots in the rugs. The article shocked Craig. Iqbal Masih was the same age as Craig. Craig couldn't imagine what it was like to work all day six days a week and never have a chance to attend school or play. Craig ripped the article out of the newspaper and put it in his backpack. But he couldn't get Iqbal Masih out of his mind. Riding the bus to school, he took the article out of his backpack and read it over and over again. After school, he went to the library and got as much information as he could find on child labor. The next day, with the teacher's permission, he told the class about Iqbal Masih and about the millions of children who were forced to work in factories and mines.

1. How did Craig feel after he read the article?

Use information from the paragraph to support your answer. Write two details that show how Craig felt after he read the article.

Detail 1: _____

Detail 2: _____

REFERENCE

Gunning, T (2010). Reading Comprehension Boosters. Josey Bass. San Francisco:CA. (pp 39-42, 142,143,196,197)

Appendix B: Ongoing test (1 of 2)

**Identifying different types of text**

Identify the following types of text. Write persuasive, instructive, informative or descriptive after each one.

1.



2. You should not park where you see these signs and markings: 'No Parking', 'Clearway', double yellow lines beside the kerb, double white lines in the middle of the road.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix B: Ongoing test (2 of 2)

3. Visit Rome, capital of Italy and ancient capital of the Roman Empire, which is blessed with splendid ruins, delightful markets and intriguing narrow streets that beckon the adventurous explorer.

4. This car has an aluminium body to resist rust and bumper shields that can absorb an impact of up to 7 mph without distortion.



bbc.co.uk/skillswise

©BBC 2011 

answer:

1. informative.
2. instructive.
3. persuasive.
4. descriptive.

Reference

Black, J. (2008). Types of texts. *Identifying different types of texts*. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/quiz/en03text-e3-quiz

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix C: Final test (1 of 3)

Read the article, and answer the questions that follow it.

Two-Headed Snakes

1 They say that two heads are better than one. But that isn't true if the two heads belong to one snake. For one thing, each head has a mind of its own. Sometimes one snake head wants to go one way, and the other wants to go the other way. They end up going nowhere. Another problem is that they fight over food. While they're deciding whether to go after a mouse or other animal, the animal will escape. An even bigger problem is that one head might see the other head as being food and attack it and even try to swallow it.

Why Two-Headed Snakes Live Longer in Zoos

2 Two-headed snakes don't have a chance in the wild. While they're fighting or figuring out which way to go, another animal will grab them and eat them. In captivity, two-headed snakes can live for a long time. One pair named Thelma and Louise lived in a zoo for seventeen years.

3 Scientists are now studying two-headed snakes. They want to see if the snakes can learn to work together to catch food.



1. Why is having two heads a problem for snakes? Use information from the article to support your answer. Write two details that the author included to show that having two heads is a problem for snakes.

Main Idea	Support
For a snake, having two heads is a problem	Detail1: <u>Because they fight over food.</u> Detail2: <u>Since one head might see the other head as being food and attack it and even try to swallow it.</u>

2. Why are two-headed snakes better off in a zoo than they are in the wild? Write your answer on the lines. If you don't remember why, go back to paragraph 2 and find the sentence that explains.

Because while they're fighting or figuring out which way to go another animal will grab them and eat them.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix C: Final test (2 of 3)

Read the article, and answer the questions that follow it.

Assistance Dogs

1 While traveling in far-off countries, Bonnie Bergin noticed that people who couldn't walk used animals to aid them. They used donkeys and burros (BUR-rohz) to help them get around. The animals carried clothing, pots and pans and food, and other things that could be sold. The donkeys and burros helped the disabled people earn a living. A light bulb went off in Bonnie Bergin's head. She had an idea: "Why not get animals to aid disabled people in the United States?" Of course, there aren't many donkeys or burros in the United States. But there are lots of dogs in the United States. Bonnie Bergin took her idea home with her. In 1975 she started training dogs that would help disabled people.

The First Assistance Dog

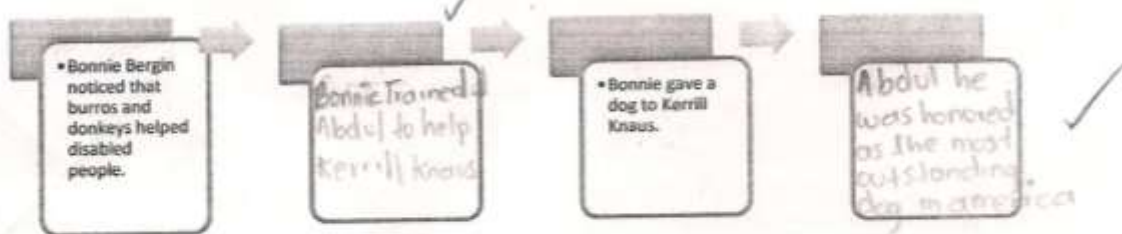
2 People told Bonnie Bergin that training dogs to help disabled people was a ridiculous idea. They said that it would never work. But that didn't stop her. The first dog that Bonnie trained was Abdul (ab-DOOL). Bonnie Bergin spent two years training Abdul. Bonnie trained Abdul to help Kerrill Knaus (nows).

3 Kerrill Knaus has very weak muscles. She can't use her legs and has difficulty using her arms. Abdul learned to carry books, food, and other things for her. He carried them in two bags that were strapped around his back and stomach. If Kerrill dropped something, Abdul picked it up with his teeth. Abdul turned on lights and opened doors for Kerrill and even pushed elevator buttons with his paws. Abdul became Kerrill Knaus's hands and legs.

4 Abdul helped Kerrill Knaus for more than a dozen years. He was honored as the most outstanding dog in America. Abdul proved that dogs could help people.
Assistance Dog Institute

5 In 1991 Bonnie Bergin started the Assistance Dog Institute. Besides raising and training dogs, the Assistance Dog Institute, now known as the Bergin University of Canine Studies, teaches students how to raise and train assistance dogs. The students go off on their own and start assistance dog centers in their towns and cities. Bonnie Bergin has helped others set up more than 150 centers for training assistance dogs. Hundreds of assistance dogs have been trained. And it all started with an idea and a dog by the name of Abdul.

1. Show the main things that happened in this article. Fill in the boxes with missing happenings.

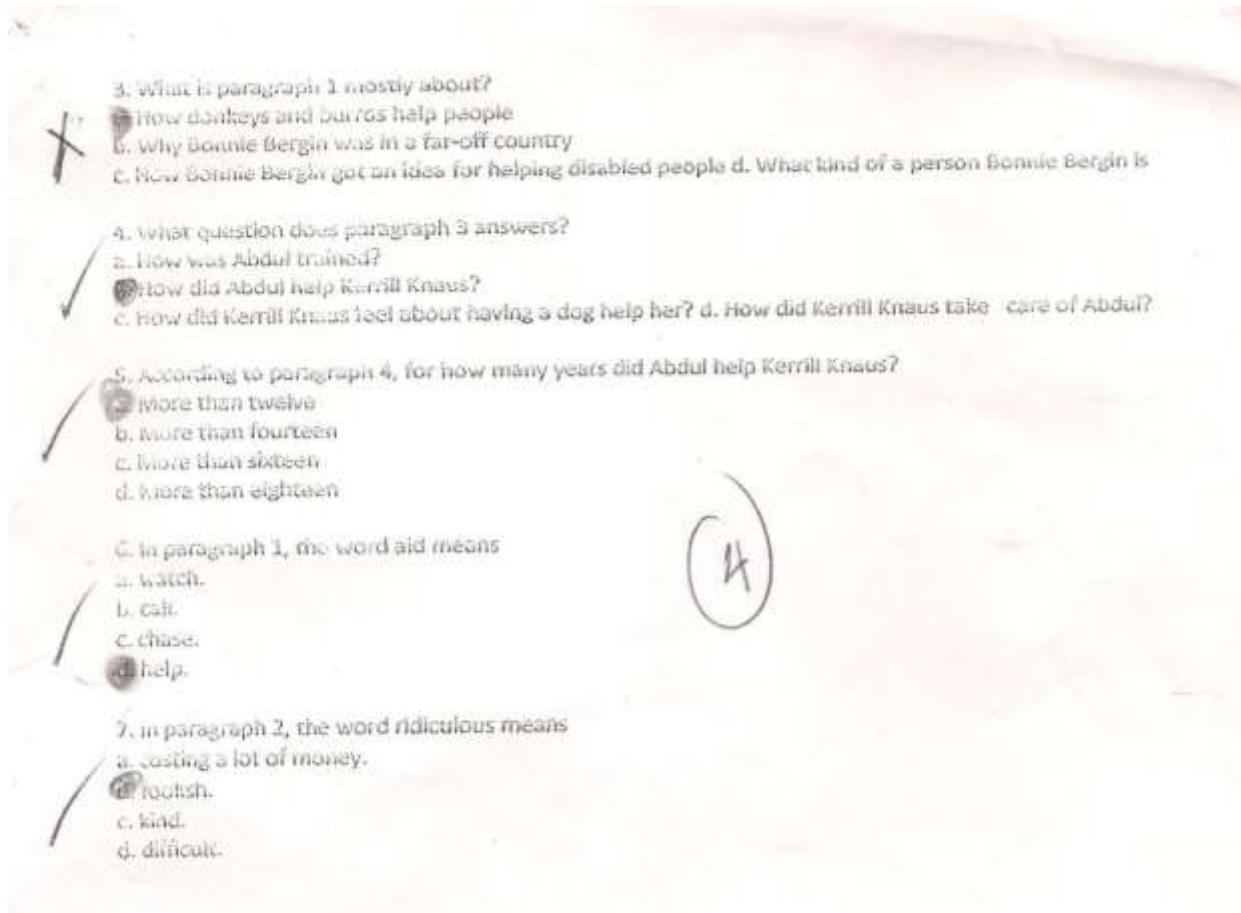


2. Now use the boxes in the chart to help you summarize the paragraph. Begin with a topic sentence. The topic sentence should tell the main thing that Bonnie Bergin did.

Bonnie Bergin noticed that burros and donkeys helped disabled people. She trained Abdul to help Kerrill Knaus and then gave a dog to Kerrill Knaus. Abdul he was honored as the most outstanding dog in America.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix C: Final test (3 of 3)



Reference

Gunning, T. (2010). Reading Comprehension Boosters. (pp 39-42, 142,143,196,197) San Francisco: CA. Josey Bass.

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...**Appendix D: Open ended Questionnaire 1**

Objective: To know your feelings about the new experiences with this class.

Instructions: Answer these questions using L1. Feel free to write any comment you want. Do not write your name.

Questions

1. Do you feel motivated to use the blog? Why?
2. What has been your contribution to teamwork? You think you're doing okay? What to improve?
3. Name three actions you did not know how to work in the computer.
4. The instructions that appear on each task, why are they important to you?
5. Since you know your learning style, which new strategy have you implemented for studying? What do you need to implement?

Answers

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...**Appendix E: Open ended Questionnaire 2**

Objective: To know your feelings about the new experiences with this class.

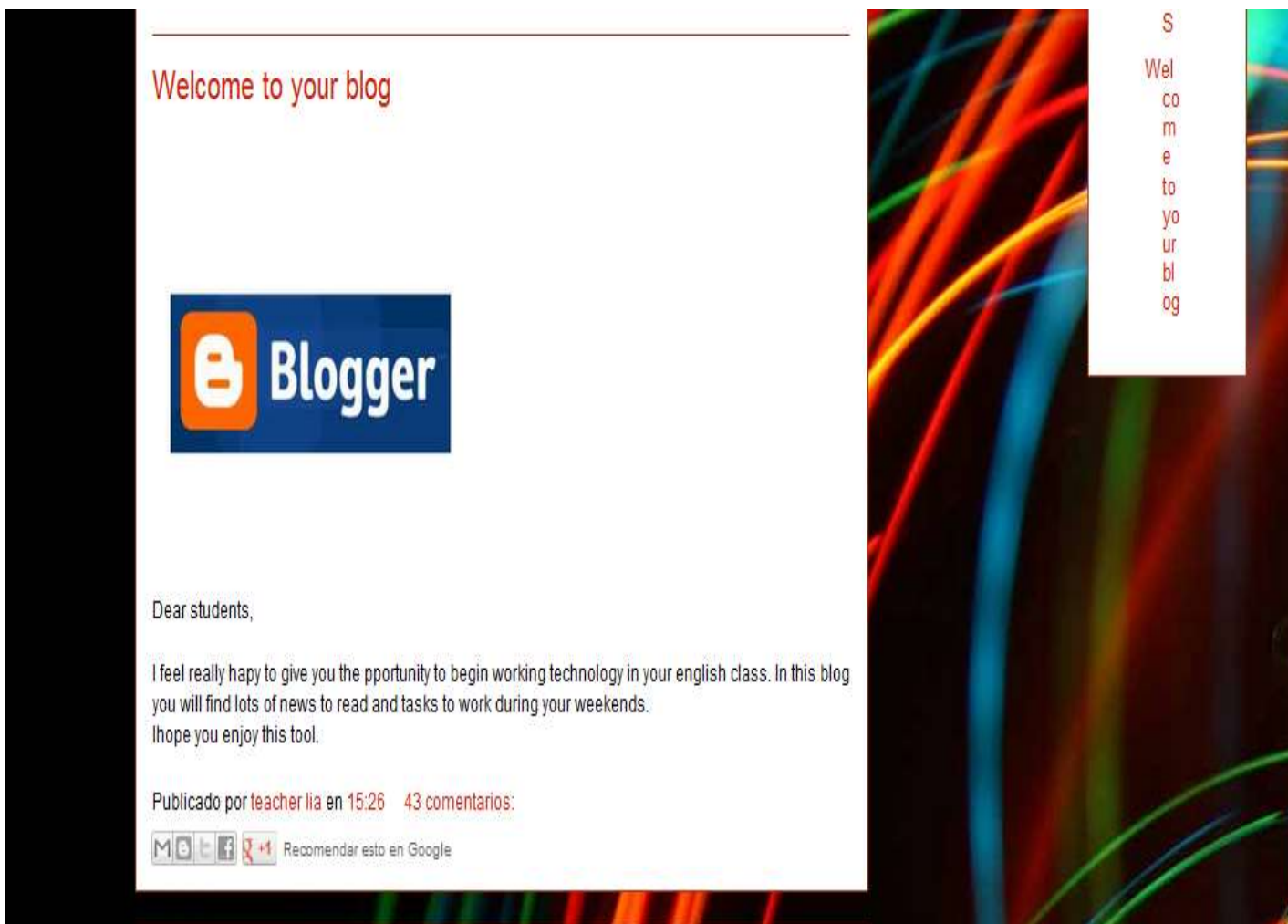
Instructions: Answer these questions using L1. Feel free to write any comment you want. Do not write your name.

How has been your relationship with

- 1) Technology
- 2) English and the contents of the blog
- 3) Collaborative work
- 4) The teacher
- 5) Themselves as students

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix F: My blog (1 of 2)



Appendix F: My blog (2 of 2)

+1 Recomendar esto en Google

1 comentario:



teacher lia 26 de febrero de 2012 12:51

Hi Licho,

I think you are working very well. Try to change your title for one in English, right?

Complete your comment about the rule. On your main page try to post some nice pics about you!

Responder

Introduce tu comentario...

Comentar como:

Publicar

Vista previa

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix G: Pedagogical Intervention Timeline

Instrument	Number of interventions	date
Pre-test	1	May 15
On Going Test	1	June 5
Final Test	1	October 9
Stimulated Recall	1	June 5
Open Questionnaire 1	1	May 17
Open Questionnaire 2	1	June 10
My Blog	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 19	March 6/13 March 20/27 April 10/17 April 24/May 8 May 22/29 July 3/10 July 17/24 July 31/August 14 August 21/28 September 4/11

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix H: Lesson Plan (1 of 3)

DEFINING AND IMPLEMENTING TEACHING STRATEGIES TO FOSTER SELF-DIRECTED LANGUAGE LEARNING IN COLOMBIA RESEARCH PROJECT PART 2 (On-going Work) 2012

LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE FOR INTERVENTION

Adapted from Dr. Joan Rubin's Lesson Planner, ICELT lesson plan template and Weekly Planner 2012-02 Department of Languages and Cultures, Universidad de La Sabana

Name of researcher: LiaMontalvo University Code Number: 201113257	
Institution: Institucion Educativa Concentracion Simon Araujo	
Date of Class: DAY: 5-12-19 MONTH:04 YEAR: 2012 Week No. 1-2-3	Time of Class: 7:20-9:00 a.m. Length of class: 1h 40 min Time Frame: 3 class periods <small>(Within which to accomplish the lesson; could take more than one class period)</small>
Class/grade: 10 th grade	Room: Virtual lab
Number of students: 22	Average age of Students: 15 years old

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix H: Lesson Plan (2 of 3)

Number of years of English study: 5 years					Level of students A1 A2 B1 B2 C1 C2	
Lesson Number					Research Circle Leader:	
1	2	3	4	5	Maritza Hosset	
6	7	8	9			
Set Lesson Goals						
(Select kind of genre or text you will work on and consider learners' language level. Describe the session task)						
1. Identify their learning styles and the activities to practice to improve their comprehension						
Session task						
Text 1: http://www.adprima.com/studytips.htm						
Activities: 1) reading about tips used from some students to success in studies. 2) fill in a chart with tips they also practice, tips they do not practice, but will adopt 3) tips they will not practice						
Text 2: http://www.vark-learn.com/english/page.asp?p=questionnaire						
Activities: 1) application of the questionnaire to identify their learning style 2) identification of the most relevant characteristics. 2) classification of some students from the last reading according to the activities they do to study.						
Language Goal					Assessment Criteria	

IMPROVING READING COMPREHENSION AND SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING THROUGH...

Appendix H: Lesson Plan (3 of 3)

<p>Learning to Learn Goal</p> <p>The student will learn to identify the main characteristics of their own learning style to be conscious of the practice they should do to success in their studies.</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The students practice the classifying questionnaire in a conscious way giving true information from their own experience. 2. The students classify other students' learning style according to what they learned 	
<p>Identify a topic for the lesson</p> <p>1. Learning styles</p>		
<p>Materials and Resources</p> <p>Describe and write a rationale (why will you use it) for all the materials that you are going to use in the lesson, and attach copies/photocopies with their proper referring citation. Write a list appropriate level materials (video, audio, worksheets, copies, online resources, etc.) to support your goals. Include copies of your materials and number them.</p>		
<p>Material 1 Name: teacher la's blog- tasks 3-4-5 www.teacher-la.blogspot.com</p>	<p>Rationale: This is the core material in Where I have included all the reading strategies to study.</p>	<p>Annex 1</p>
<p>Material 2 Name: students' personal blog (you can find their blogs through "students list" tab in the blog above)</p>	<p>Rationale: This is the technological tool where they are posting their outcomes</p>	<p>Annex 2</p>
<p>Material x Name:</p>	<p>Rationale:</p>	<p>Annex 3</p>
<p>Assumed knowledge</p> <p>Write a description of the language/skills/competences that students already know/have that will serve as a basis for new language/skills input.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Their own living experience about how to study 2. Sharing information from their classmates 		