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The Use of Reading Tasks Based on Authentic Texts to Improve Reading Comprehension on

English Learners

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Research Report submitted

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Sandra L. Hortúa

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Abstract

This research study examines   the assumptions of   working with reading tasks using
authentic texts through a social network (Edmodo) in order to enhance the reading
comprehension levels of a group of ten pre- intermediate students from the English Language
center in Universidad de Córdoba, in Monteria Colombia and also a group of 10 pre-intermediate
students from Institución Educativa San Bernardo, in Montelibano Colombia. An action
research methodology was carried out in this study. The first step in this process was to reckon
the problem and gather some preliminary data for further study of the problem statement. After
that, the research study focused on the target problem and the preliminary data compiled in order
to answer the research question. The following step was the design and implementation of the
different data collection tools including the proposed reading tasks. The data obtained along the
intervention was analyzed mostly through qualitative procedures taking into account Grounded
theory and also some other procedures to validate the data through triangulation. At the end of
this process, the findings of this research study suggested that the use of reading strategies, the
reading comprehension levels as well as the development of self-direction and autonomy on the
learners had a significant   improvement provided by the use of reading tasks based on authentic
texts which were developed by the students mostly by their own with some help of the teacher.

Key words: Motivation; Reading Comprehension; Reading Strategies;   Authentic Texts;
Reading Tasks; Self-directed Learning; Social Network**.**

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Resumen

Esta investigación examina las suposiciones de trabajar con actividades de lectura

basadas en textos auténticos a través de una red social (Edmodo), con el fin de mejorar los

niveles de comprensión de lectura de un grupo de diez estudiantes de nivel pre-intermedio desde

el Centro de Idiomas de Inglés en la Universidad de Córdoba en Montería Colombia y desde la

Institución Educativa San Bernardo en Montelibano Colombia. Una metodología de

investigación-acción se llevó a cabo en este estudio. El primer paso en este proceso fue a

reconocer el problema y recopilar algunos datos preliminares para el estudio adicional del

enunciado del problema. Después de eso, se hizo énfasis en el problema principal y en los

datos recogidos preliminarmente con el fin de dar respuesta a la pregunta de investigación. El

siguiente paso fue el diseño e implementación de las herramientas para recolectar datos

incluyendo las tareas de lectura propuestas. Los datos obtenidos a lo largo de la intervención

fueron analizados principalmente a través de procedimientos cualitativos teniendo en cuenta la

teoría de Grounded y también otros procedimientos para validar los datos a través de

triangulación. Al final de todo el proceso, los resultados de este estudio de investigación sugieren

que el uso de estrategias de lectura, los niveles de comprensión de lectura, así como el desarrollo

del auto aprendizaje y autonomía en los alumnos tuvieron una mejoría significativa mediante el

uso de las tareas de lecturas basadas en textos auténticos que fueron trabajadas por los mismos

estudiantes con algo de ayuda del profesor.

Palabras claves: Motivación; Comprensión Lectora; Estrategias de Lectura; Textos

Auténticos; Tareas de Lectura; Aprendizaje Auto-dirigido; Red Social.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Encouraging learners to build reading habits can be a really difficult task. Learners often need motivation to read and teachers are always looking for ways to generate in learners a positive attitude towards reading. The causes of this issue can be attributed to different reasons such as: lack of access to materials that may interest students, relevant cultural texts, displaced discourses, or perhaps, inefficient reading strategies that demotivate students. The Incorporation of new materials like authentic reading texts are presented in this study as inspiring resources for struggling readers. Unfolding these materials into the learning environments might raise and nurture the development of positive attitudes towards this skill. These kinds of non-traditional texts may entertain young adult learners, a beneficial aspect that would guide them to read for pleasure, which might result helpful for learners to overcome difficulties in reading comprehension.

Our world today is characterized by the big amount of information available thanks to all the advances obtained in technology and communication. For this reason, it is necessary for the students to receive some training in the use of certain strategies that allow them to manage and use effectively all the information available. In other words, the students need to develop different language learning strategies, which Nunan (1999, p.171) defines as: "mental and communicative procedures learners use in order to learn and use a language".

The development of these language learning strategies is also important because they help to the learners to develop self-direction. If learners develop self-direction, then they will become the main responsible for planning, doing and evaluating everything that takes place in their learning process, which undoubtedly is positive for their lifelong learning process.

This section provides an overview of the study, identifies the research question, and addresses the significance of the project. It will provide important background material to equip the reader to understand the chapters that follow.

1.1 Research Question

How does the use of reading tasks based on authentic texts enhance reading comprehension in students of pre-intermediate level?

1.2 Research objective

To determine to what extent the use of authentic reading texts can enhance reading comprehension.

1.2.1 Specific objectives

- To motivate students to read for pleasure.

- To   make students aware of the reading strategies that they use while working on reading tasks.

- To encourage learners to develop self-direction by reading authentic texts.

1.3 Rationale

English teachers have to find ways to connect the English classroom literacy

practices to the real world. It can be argued that materials other than traditional texts need

to be brought into the classroom to expose students to the language used in the outside

world. This is relevant in settings where realistic and authentic samples of everyday

language need to be incorporated.

Selecting materials to be used in the classroom is not an easy task. They should look

interesting and very attractive, and in a way that students can feel motivated towards the

learning process. Thus, materials not only provide learners with a wide range of useful

information but also can play a part in enhancing learner motivation, one of the key issues

in language learning, that facilitate its acquisition (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

When people first think of authentic materials, they usually bring up to their minds

samples, such as: newspaper and magazine articles. However, the term can also cover such

things as: songs, web pages, radio & TV broadcasts, films, leaflets, etc., indeed anything

written in the target language and used unedited in the classroom. For this research it is

planned to work specifically with authentic sample reading texts.

The main reason that motivated the development of this research proposal was to get an improvement of reading comprehension on the students through the use of reading tasks, authentic texts and self-directed strategies. The different observations made to the groups chosen for the development of the study as well as the application of some questionnaires to the students were also tools that reinforced the decision of developing this proposal.

The use of authentic texts and reading tasks has many advantages. First of all, the students can practice and acquire different strategies that can be useful at the moment of reading different kind of texts. Also, these tasks can be helpful to promote the improvement of the levels of reading comprehension on the learners. Besides that, through the use of authentic texts, the students can perceive the real value and importance of reading well, which can be a motivating and positive factor to promote reading for pleasure.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the use of reading tasks, based on authentic texts, as a motivating factor to enhance the reading comprehension level in pre-intermediate learners at the English language center of Universidad de Cordoba in Monteria- Colombia and at Institución Educativa San Bernardo in Montelibano- Colombia.

This research focuses on the nature of reading comprehension and key motivational aspects like the use of authentic texts. The kind of selected tasks is based on the assumptions that learners may feel and their interest in reading authentic texts having the opportunity to gain real information, which can be motivating for them.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

This section contains information about some key concepts for this research and

also provides a framework of previous studies related to this particular research study,

specifically about the use of authentic texts for teaching and learning purposes.

2.1 Reading comprehension

Different views and different definitions about reading comprehension have been

presented in the last decades. Klingner, Vaughn and Boardman (2007, p.2) for instance,

define reading comprehension as: "The process of constructing meaning by coordinating a

number of complex processes that include word reading, word and word knowledge, and

fluency." Snow (2002, p.11) also presents a definition of this term. She defines reading

comprehension as: "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning

through interaction and involvement with written language". Grellet (2006, p.3) even uses

more simple words to define this concept. For him reading comprehension refers to:

"extracting the required information from it (referring to a text) as efficiently as possible".

All the above definitions point out to the same idea: reading comprehension has to do with

the act of understanding what we read by an intentional, active and interactive process that

takes place before, during and after reading a text.

2.2 Task

In order to define the term task, several definitions of this term will be unfolded.

Firstly, Crookes (1986, p1) regards a task as: "A piece of work or an activity, usually with a

specified objective, undertaken as part of an educational course, at work, or used to elicit

data for research. It can be seen in the previous definition that 'Task', is broadly perceived.

This view embraces not only pedagogical functions but also job-related work that can be

taken as means of obtaining information for educational purposes.

For Long (1989) cited by Nunan, (1999) a task can be defined as: "a piece of work

undertaken for oneself or for others, freely or for some reward". Nunan (1999) also offers a

definition for task but using more pedagogical terms. For him a task is:

> "a piece of classroom work that involves learners in comprehending, manipulating,
>
> producing, or interacting in the target language while their attention is focused on mobilizing their
>
> grammatical knowledge in order to express meaning, and in which the intention is to convey
>
> meaning rather than to manipulate form" (Nunan, 1999, p.25)

There are many other researchers and authors who have defined this term.

However, after reading these three definitions, it can be said that reading tasks refer to any classroom work done by the students in which they have to read a text and do something that goes beyond the simple reading comprehension of it.

When working with tasks of any kind, it is important to develop task analysis no matter if we are doing research or not. According to Rubin (2008) task analysis is part of the planning stage carried out for anybody before doing a task. This task analysis usually consists of three parts: task purpose, task classification and task demands.

For this particular research, tasks analysis will take place before the students work on the tasks. It is important to guide and take into account the students at the moment of doing task analysis because this is what will allow us to establish an action plan and determine a time line depending on the reading task that has been designed.

2.3. Reading Strategies

Nunan (1999) highlights the importance of establishing a reading purpose. When learners are aware of the purpose of reading, they can keep in mind what they are going to learn. However, it is also important for the learner the use of certain reading strategies that can facilitate and allow them to succeed in any reading task or exercise developed.

Reading strategies are defined as learning techniques, behaviors, problem-solving or study skills which make learning more effective and efficient (Oxford & Crookall, 1989).

In the context of reading, reading strategies indicate how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense of what they read, and what they do when they do not understand something (Block, 1986). Reading strategies refer to "the mental operations involved when readers purposefully approach a text and make sense of what they read" (Barnett, 1988, p.66)

Taking into account the main goal of this research, the intervention stage was focused on the design of six reading tasks using authentic materials which were intended to present and put into practice certain reading strategies that facilitate the improvement of the reading comprehension levels of the students. Grabe (2009 , p.209) identified the following strategies for supporting reading comprehension: summarizing, forming questions, answering questions and elaborative interrogation, activating prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, using text-structure awareness, using visual graphics and graphics organizers, and inference. From all of them, we decided to focus only on four of them for the design and application of the reading tasks carried out in the intervention. They are: Answering questions and elaborative interrogation, activating prior knowledge, using visual graphics and graphics organizers, and inference.

One important study carried out on this issue is the one developed by Echeverry and McNulty (2009). This study was related to the use of reading strategies to develop thinking skills and reading comprehension. This study is relevant because it provides useful insights

about the age and characteristics of the participants and the advantages of using reading

tasks to develop reading strategies.

Another study that deserves to be mentioned here is the one developed by Jimenez

(2009). In her study about the use of Web-Quests and the improvement of critical reading

skills, Jimenez took four out of eight university students as a sample for her intervention.

She found that there was a noticeable improvement in the critical reading skills of students

as well as in the development of autonomy, which were aspects that were related directly to

the use of Web-Quests. The improvement in these aspects could be noticed after analyzing

the results obtained in the pre stage and post stage of the Web-Quests applied to these

students.

2.4. Authentic Materials

The term authentic material has been defined in several ways. It is common to see in

these definitions the exposure to real life situations or real language world. Peacock (1997)

considers that authentic materials are those that have been produced to fulfill some social

purpose in the language community. Similarly, Nunan (1989) refers to it as materials that

have not been produced for the purpose of language teaching. Gardner and Miller (1999,

p.101) also talked about authentic materials and explained that: "authentic materials mean

any text (printed or digital) or tape which was produced for a purpose other than teaching

the target language". All these authors agree on a key aspect: Authentic materials refer to

any material that has been produced in response to real life communicative needs rather

than a material to be used in teaching a language.

Several studies have found that authentic materials can increase reading

development by introducing students to new vocabulary and expressions (Bacon &

Finneman, 1990; Berardo, 2006).

Berardo (2006) found some advantages in the use of authentic materials in her study

called: The use of authentic materials in the teaching of reading. After the implementation,

Berardo (2006) found that the participants began to work with authentic reading materials

and they developed reading tasks and pair and group work based on the authentic

readings. In this study, Berardo concluded that the use of authentic reading materials had a

positive effect on the learning process of students as they benefited from the exposure to

real language being used in a real context. The students' motivation increased considerably

taking into account the results of her study and also, the students experienced a change in

the use of language noticing a wider variety of text types after some exposure to authentic

reading materials.

It is important to consider for this particular research project that the combination

of authentic materials and the introduction of new strategies to the learner can be negative

if the combination of both aspects is not carried out carefully. Rubin et al (n.d.) suggests to

progress gradually starting with some practical exercises of the new strategy with the usual

lesson and not with the authentic material immediately.

2.4.1 Advantages of using authentic texts in the classroom

Bringing authentic texts to the classroom can represent a wide range of benefits for the

teaching learning process. Some positive aspects of authentic texts are:

✓ They can expose learners to language in context

✓ Authentic texts can offer positive effects in students´ motivation.

✓ They can cover maintain students informed about current issues

✓ They are challenging and offer opportunities for putting into practice reading

strategies

✓ Authentic texts might encourage learners to read for pleasure

Incorporating and using authentic materials in the classroom to teach a foreign

language offer more than linguistic advantages. Scholars argue for the motivating power of

authentic materials. McNeil (1994) and Kilickaya (2004) indicate that the use of authentic

texts is now considered to be one way for increasing students' motivation for learning since

they give the learners the feeling that they are learning the real language. Empirical studies

(Bacon & Finnemann's, 1990; Thanajaro, 2000) have confirmed that students' motivation

and self-satisfaction increased after exposure to authentic aural texts. In addition, Kim

(2000) argues that authentic materials make a major contribution to overcoming certain

cultural barriers to language learning.

2.5. Self-Directed Learning

The term self-directed learning (SDL) has been associated with self-instruction and

learner independence. Different definitions have been given to this term. Some of them

include: Hiemstra (1994), Gibbons (2008) and Garrison (1997). Even though these authors

use different words to define Self-Directed Learning, all of them refer to it as any form of

study where learners are the main responsible for planning, doing and in some cases

evaluating all what they do in their learning process.

The benefits of SDL are best delineated in terms of the type of learning that it is carried

out. It is seen that the literature on SDL affirms that self-directed learners demonstrate a

greater awareness of their own responsibility when learning something (Garrison, 1997).

There is a relevant study carried out on this field called " Using Web-Based Activities

to Promote Reading", which was carried out by Rátiva Velandia, M., Pedreros Torres, A.,

& Núñez Alí, M. (2012). In this study, it was found that students working on web based

reading activities could increase reading comprehension and were encouraged to develop

self-direction. Findings in this exploratory study suggests that the interactive activities were

more motivating than those in which students had to handle with the printed readings

because they could explore different web sites at the same time, use dictionaries online or

listen to music.

2.6. Social Network

The channel in which all the tasks were carried out was a social network; this term

has been recently treated in learning environments as an innovative mean to carry out the

teaching learning process. Barnes (1954) first introduced this term referring to it as a social

structure made of nodes that were generally in individual form or through organizations.

Different studies related to the use of the internet, specifically about the use of

social networks, have been recently developed. One of them was carried out by Rubio and

Serrat (2010). This study, which was developed at the University of Barcelona Institute for

lifelong learning (IL3-UB) , outlines the way how a group of students from a community

management and social media postgraduate course developed, apart from the teacher set

task in the classroom, numerous out-of-class communication and information exchange

tasks obtaining successful results. In the conclusions of the study, Rubio and Serrat (2010)

found that social networks such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn were used as natural

extensions of the classroom and as natural sites of learning. Facebook was the most

popular social network used and teachers used it to share materials of common interest.

Also, learners used twitter to share links from course modules, asked questions about the

tasks they had to do and also used it to organize meetings or other events.

Considering all this, it was assumed that the use of *Edmodo* (a social network) could facilitate the development of this research project. This social network, could help in the accomplishment of the aims of our research and also could become a very motivating factor within the development of the research implementation.

Chapter Three: Research Design

3.1 Type of study

This study emerged from observational processes carried out in two classrooms of

pre intermediate learners. Student's lack of motivation to read and the low reading

comprehension skills of the students were two issues detected to be affecting the students'

performance. It was assumed that the lack of attractive materials and the lack of knowledge

of reading strategies were the main reasons for this to happen. To approach the

aforementioned issues, a set of reading tasks based on authentic texts as a motivating and

encouraging factor to foster the use of reading strategies was planned to tackle the

shortcoming. Those reading tasks were for students to work independently by using a social

network as the host site to work on and share their products and learning experiences.

Since the main reason that motivated the development of this research began with a

research question related to classroom experiences and learners difficulties, it was decided

to do a reflective process intended to the exploration, analysis and evaluation of different

aspects related to the teaching and learning of reading in the two groups of students chosen

to plan and take actions oriented to obtain a change and improvement in the reading

comprehension levels through different reading tasks based on authentic texts.

For all this, it can be said that this was an action research because the study was

based on a classroom research carried out by us (the teachers) in order to reflect about a

particular issue that was taking place in the classroom. As Nunan and Bailey (2009, p.227)

state: "action research represents a particular stance…in which the practitioner is engaged

in critical reflections, on ideas, the informed application and experimentation of ideas in

practice, and the critical evaluation of the outcomes". For these particular cases, the

reflection, the experimentation and the critical evaluation were carried out with two

different groups: 1) A group of 10 students of pre-intermediate level from the Language

Center of Universidad de Cordoba in Monteria, Colombia. And 2) A group of 10 ninth

graders from the English club of the Institución Educativa San Bernardo in Montelibano,

Colombia.

Figure 1. Action Research
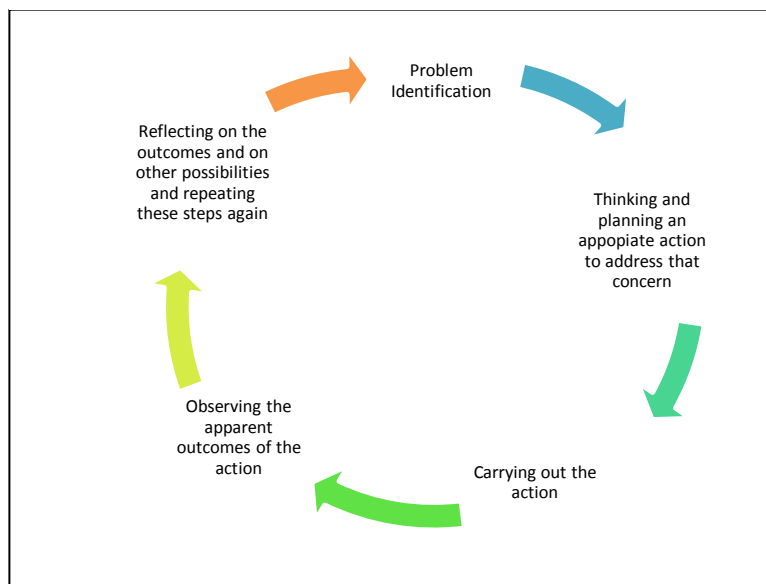
3.2 Context

As mentioned above, two different contexts were taken into account to develop this

study.

3.2.1 Context 1

The Language Center at Universidad de Cordoba in Monteria- Colombia is a private

language institution, which offers different English courses according to the students' age

and level. This language center provides a favorable context with remarkable facilities and

a wide range of opportunities for the learners in aspects such as: qualified teachers, updated

resources, among others. Most of the students who attend to this institution belong to

middle and high class.

3.2.2 Context 2

The Institución Educativa San Bernardo is a public institution located in Carrera 23,

Calle 18 in Montelibano, Colombia. This is an institution ranked as "superior" at "Pruebas

Saber" 2012. Most of the students who attend this institution belong to working class

families who live near the school.

The school's mission is to form every student integrally providing an education

centered in the person as a transcendental human being orienting all the teaching practices

to help to the learner in the process of learning to learn, learning to be entrepreneurs and

learning to live in community.

3.3. Participants

3.3.1 Language Center-Universidad de Córdoba

The participants chosen at the Language Center of Universidad de Cordoba belong

to a group of 10 teenagers, between 13-17 (6 girls and 4boys), who are currently in pre-

intermediate level, according to the common European Framework. They are students, who

attend the classes on Saturdays to the Language Center for a period of four hours in the

morning. These students normally attend to private schools during the week, where they

take English as a subject for two or three hours every day.

It can be seen that the student´s perception towards learning English is very

positive. They find very rewarding to take English classes, because they see lots of

possibilities in different work or academic areas.

Most of the Learners in the institution are able to deal with technological tools and

devices. They usually show their skills in this area. This fact was very positive due to the

fact that during the intervention process the students were asked to work some online tasks.

3.3.2 Institución Educativa San Bernardo

The group of students chosen at Institución Educativa San Bernardo to carry out this research was a 9th grade group of 10 students, between 13-16 (5 girls and 5 boys) from the English club of this institution. These students take two hours of English classes weekly as a subject of their curriculum and four more hours of English to develop activities during the English club sessions that take place on Wednesdays.

The students' perception towards learning English is positive. They feel motivated to learn this subject and their commitment towards the English classes and towards the English club activities is noticeable. Talking about their skills to use technology, these students are very skillful at it. For this reason, during the intervention, these students were asked to develop the reading tasks through a social network with teaching purposes called *Edmodo*.

3.4. Researchers' role

Throughout the study, the researchers played several roles. Firstly, the researchers were participant observers who identified classroom problems by collecting data in order to formulate a research question. Secondly, the researchers' role turned out in being planners and designers of the reading tasks students were to work on during the intervention stage, planners and designers of lesson plans, and also, responsible for guiding the students to get along with the platform (edmodo.com) to develop the tasks, since it was the first time that learners worked on a social network with academic purposes for students to develop the

tasks. In the following stage, the role of the researchers changed becoming facilitators and

mediators, who provided the input and support for the successful development of the

reading tasks. In the final stage, the researchers compiled all the data collected to draw

conclusions and provide an answer to the research question bearing in mind, not just the

data gathered through the intervention process, but comparing and articulating personal

findings with previous studies and the literature available.

Our role as researchers is perfectly described by Burns (1999) cited in Valencia

(2012, p.28) who summarizes the researcher's role as follows: "the researcher investigates

questions in a systematized way, collects and analyzes data including his own observations

and reflections, articulating theories, discussing his research with some colleagues in order

to validate his findings and data interpretations ".

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethic is a vital aspect in any research Project. For this study specifically, there were

some important aspects discussed with the participants, in order to avoid further

misunderstandings through the process. Firstly, students were informed that a research

project was being conducted in the classroom and all of them were invited to participate. A

consent letter that explained the purpose of the study(*see appendix A*) was given to the

students. Secondly, they were advised that any of the activities carried out in the entire

process had nothing to do with grading, so that they were not worried about any low

performance that could affect their scores. Finally, as the most important, they were told

that their names would not be used publicly in any paper. Confidentiality and anonymity

was going to be taken into account at the moment of coding data and publishing results.

3.6. Data Collection Instruments

To gather data for this research project, there were different tools to elicit it. Firstly,

in order to have an idea of the students´ reading comprehension level, a pre-reading

comprehension test, adapted from American English File 3 by Oxford university press

(2008), was applied to students (*See Appendix B).*

A structured interview was also used (*See appendix C).* This type of interview was a

flexible method that was perceived as a casual technique. This interview was conducted as

a preliminary step in the research process, as a way to generate ideas about the subjects

being investigated.

On the other hand, the use of questionnaires also took place in the process of

gathering information for this research (*See appendix D)*. In this tool, closed questions were

designed; they were set out in a systematic way in order for the informants to choose from a

range of items.

These instruments could help to find out about the topics that the students enjoyed

reading or not and also about the conscious or unconscious use of reading strategies among

other aspects that might be vital for the process.

The instruments described above were applied in the preliminary phase of this

study. Afterwards, in the intervention stage, six reading tasks were carefully designed based

on the students' answers in the tools applied. For each reading task, a task analysis and a

lesson plan were created (*See appendix E and F)*. Reading preferences were taken into

account to select the authentic texts that would be included in the reading tasks. This type

of self-access reading materials incorporated features of presentation, programmed

instructions, self-pacing and small steps to develop the tasks.   The main advantages of

using these online reading tasks are founded in the access at any time, in any place, and for

unlimited number of times. Due to these factors; students were able to develop their reading

skills with little teacher´s help.

During a time period of six weeks, the learners had to work on six different reading

tasks (one per week), where they needed to access to their account on *Edmodo*, read the

instructions given, download the reading task, develop it and upload the products   by the

end of the current week.

The validity of the reading tasks used in the intervention process was verified by

enclosing the design, to point out the research question, the objectives proposed, as well as

the data collected in the preliminary interview and questionnaire.

Another important instrument utilized to obtain data was the use of personal journal

kept by the learners, (*see appendix G).* This tool was perceived as a vehicle for reflection

on the process of developing the reading tasks. It can be said that it was a relevant

instrument to gather data, which offered learners opportunities to evaluate their

performance. Lindberg (1987) applied the use of journals to help learners to gain a deeper

understanding of texts in English. He used a double entry journal that focused on

descriptive writing and reflective observation of the writing process. This example of using

a journal is a clear way to give learners the chances to write their observations and reactions

on the process of carrying out an activity.

In addition to the above mentioned tools, two more instruments were used to gather

data. In terms of the evaluation process of the intervention, it was applied a post

questionnaire which contained a set of ten questions that could help students to reflect upon

all the strategies they performed to carry out the activities in the platform as well as their

perceptions of their reading comprehension level and their skills to work autonomously.

(See appendix H). Finally, as a last tool to obtain a source of data, a post test was applied.

The intention of applying this test to the learners was basically to compare the students'

reading comprehension level before and after the intervention. (*See appendix I)*

3.7. Data Collection Procedures

Three steps were developed during the research study. The first step consisted on a reflective process developed by the researchers acting as participant observers having opportunities to reflect about the difficulties of the students chosen in regards to their reading comprehension process. This reflection and observation process was accompanied by some data gathered though a pre-questionnaire and a pre-interview. It is important to mention that in this step the researchers had the opportunity to reflect also about the use of reading strategies and the reading preferences of the learners.

During the second step, the researchers applied the six reading tasks that were designed for the pedagogical intervention. During this step, the students were encouraged to write their reflections about the development of the tasks on their personal journals. These instruments provided useful information that was used later in the analysis and reports that emerged from this study.

In the last step, the researchers had the opportunity to continue doing a deeper analysis of the research question as well as some comparisons with other data collected in terms of reading strategies use and the perception about the reading comprehension levels through the application of a post-questionnaire. These three steps had in terms of reliability and validity and also on the general organization of the research.

3.8. Design and validation of instruments and procedures

In any study, it is relevant to revise the tools that are used to gather and evaluate the data. In order to validate the instruments it is necessary to verify whether the tools elicit the information for which they were mainly designed to. In order to achieve this, all the instruments used in the research (questionnaires, interview, reading tasks, journals) were revised in terms of the number of questions and items that covered. After that, they were piloted in both contexts in order to make adjustments and/or changes to make them more effective at the moment of gathering the data.

For this research, hybrid techniques were carried out as a way to obtain data. In this study, a combination of procedures was planned in order to select the benefits from different sources of data, pointing out useful insights that could lead to triangulation which is a strategy that guarantees the reliability and validity of the data collected. Denzin & Lincoln (1994) define triangulation as: "a strategy to provide "rigor, breadth, and depth" to an investigation" (p.2).

Preliminary data was gathered through a pre-reading test, a preliminary questionnaire and interview which unfolded learners the opportunities to express their reading-preferences, their own opinion about reading, among other relevant aspects. Furthermore, in the intervention stage the reading comprehension skill was tested by the use of six reading tasks that were developed by students using a social network called

Edmodo. Finally, a post questionnaire and a post reading test were applied to them in order

to allow learners to state their own words and views on the reading tasks based on authentic

texts.

Chapter Four: Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation

This research project prompts to determine if the use of reading tasks based on

authentic texts helped to improve the reading comprehension level of two different groups

of pre-intermediate students (One group in the language Center at Universidad de Cordoba

and the other one in Institución Educativa San Bernardo- Montelibano). For this reason, it

was necessary to design several data collection instruments that could respond to the

requirements in regards to the objectives and the research question of this study. A

chronogram was followed in order to carry out the process of intervention and

implementation. This was divided into three main stages. In each stage, several tools were

used to gathered different type of data. See table 1 below:

Table 1. Pedagogical Intervention and Implementation.

Stages	Date	Activity
Colleting preliminary data	Week 1- June 30th- July 6th	Pre-test
	Week 2- July 9th -14th	Pre-questionnaire
	Week 3- July 16th-21th	Pre-Interview
Implementing the reading tasks	Week 4- July 30th-August 5th	Reading task and Journal 1
	Week 5- August 6th-August 12th	Reading task and Journal 2
	Week 6- August 13th- August 19th	Reading task and Journal 3
	Week 7- August 20th- August 24th	Reading task and Journal 4
	Week 8- August 27th- September 2nd	Reading task and Journal 5
	Week 9- September 3rd- September 9th	Reading task and Journal 6
Evaluating process	Week 10- Wednesday, September 12th	Post-test
	Week 11- September 22nd	Post-Questionnaire

As it is shown on the table above, a pre- test was applied in order to have a general picture of the students´ reading comprehension level.

After the students took the pretest, the sample population exams were classified and graded. On one hand, results from the group of pre intermediate students in the language center in Unicordoba showed that the mean was 67%, what can suggest that these learners were in a reading comprehension rank between fair and good taking into account the rating scale that is used in that institution, which goes from 1-100% (*See table 2*).

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Pretest Results, in the Sample Group from the Language Center in Universidad de Cordoba.

#S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Grades	60%	70%	85%	50%	80%	80%	60%	85%	45%	55%

Mean: 67%	
School´s rating scale	
0-49	**Poor**
50-69	**Fair**
70-90	**Good**
91-100	**Excellent**

On the other hand, results from students at Institución Educativa San Bernardo show similar grades. They suggest a mean of 3,3 which tell us that these students were also in a reading comprehension rank between fair and good taking into account the rating scale that is used in this institution, which goes from 1,0 – 5,0. (*See table 3*)

Table 3. Reading Comprehension Pretest Results, in the Sample Group from the Institución Educativa San Bernardo

#S	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Grades	**3,0**	**3,5**	**4,0**	**3,0**	**2,5**	**4,0**	**3,5**	**4,0**	**3,0**	**2,5**
Mean: 3,3										

School´s rating scale	
1-2,9	**Poor**
3,0-3,5	**Fair**
3,6-4,5	**Good**
4,6-5,0	**Excellent**

The results in these two groups of pre-intermediate learners in both institutions, suggest that they are similarly placed in terms of their reading comprehension level. This was a factor that widely facilitated the process of intervention and implementation since the students were taken under very similar language conditions.

In the first stage, apart from the pretest, a pre-questionnaire and a pre interview were the instruments administered to collect   preliminary data. Students were asked to answer these instruments during the second and third week of July 2012. The main purpose of the

two aforementioned tools was to gather data about   students' attitudes and preferences

towards reading, as well as to find out whether they were consciously or unconsciously

using reading strategies such as: Answering questions and elaborative interrogation,

activating prior knowledge, using visual graphics and graphics organizers, or inference.

 In the following stage, the students worked weekly on six different reading

authentic tasks that were previously designed by the instructor, taking into account the

students' responses in regards to the reading preferences that were shown in the preliminary

tools. Each reading task included a lesson plan that was carefully designed with objectives

that pointed out to the improvement of the reading comprehension level and the

development of reading comprehension strategies such as: answering questions and

elaborative interrogation, activating prior knowledge, using visual graphics and graphic

organizers and inference. Also, the self-direction component was implicitly included

unfolded and discussed face to face in the classroom before the implementation. It is

important to mention that the pedagogical intervention was carried out through a social

network with teaching purposes called *Edmodo.* This site is widely known, as a web that

offers opportunities to share social and academic components.

 At the end of each task, students had to fill briefly some reflections on a personal

journal that was uploaded in a separately file from the reading task. The reading tasks were

performed during three months using the *Edmodo* social network as the host site to upload

their products. The main purpose of the reading tasks and the personal journals was to

gather information that could be used to accomplish the objectives of the research and give

an answer to the research question.

For each reading task, the students were asked to download the tasks, read and

follow the instructions to develop the activities. The students had to work on a

comprehension section that included the solution to several exercises. Also, as an extension

and final product of the main activity, sometimes the students had to design power point

presentations or brochures based on the topic of the reading. After that, learners had to

work on their personal journals to draw some reflections on their reading process. By the

end of each week, the students had to upload their products and   personal journals with the

reflections.

In the last stage, which evaluated the use of the reading tasks based on authentic

texts, the students had to answer a post questionnaire and a post reading comprehension

test. The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain extra information to give answer to the

research question (*See appendix H)*. Moreover, this tool was implemented to support the

information gathered through the previous tools as a way to triangulate the data. The post

test was applied basically to compare results before and after the pedagogical intervention,

in order to draw useful insights for the data analysis.

During the pedagogical intervention, the teacher played the role of facilitator,

supporting the students in their different needs and in the process of becoming self-directed

learners, suggesting them different ideas and strategies to work autonomously in a

meaningful and comfortable e-learning environment. Also, it could be noticed that during

the development of the implementation and the intervention process, the students

maintained a positive attitude towards the different data collection procedures that were

used.

Chapter Five: Results and Data Analysis

The data analysis in this research study was carried out based on Grounded Theory**.**

This approach to data analysis was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This is a

systematic approach for the analysis of qualitative data mostly used to understand and

reflect on social phenomena. According to Scott (1996) this approach suggests to follow

three stages for analyzing the data. The first one is *open coding* which consist on selecting

and naming categories from the analysis of the data. In this stage, the different variables are

labeled, classified and related. The second one is *axial coding* which consist of joining the

data in new ways. Here codes are assigned to establish relationships among categories. The

third and final stage is *selective coding*. In this stage one core category is selected and then

related to all the other categories and subcategories.

After a careful examination of the data collected to answer the research question,

three different categories (*see table 4*), related to reading tasks using authentic materials to

improve reading comprehension, were considered for the analysis. The idea of using

categories to analyze all the data collected was to reduce the amount of data to more

manageable themes (Nunan and Bailey, 2009).

Table 4. Categories and Sub-Categories Related to Constructs and Research Questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
How does the use of reading tasks using authentic materials enhance reading comprehension in students of pre-intermediate level?	The use of authentic texts	• Attractive topics • Non-traditional texts
	The use of reading Strategies	• Scaffolding • Planning
	The use of a social network to	• Promotion of self-

promote self-direction	direction
	• Non-traditional learning environments

5.1. The use of authentic texts

The most important aspect of using reading tasks based on authentic texts was that they could play a motivating role in the learners, which could help them to enhance their reading comprehension skills. The reading tasks were designed with the purpose of incorporating non-traditional texts to promote a better reading comprehension level in the students. When students answered in the pre interview to the kinds of topic they liked reading about, they suggested different options. The sample population "likes" was taken into account for the further design of the tasks. *Figures 2 and 3* show the students' reading preferences in both contexts: The Language center of Universidad de Cordoba and Institución Educativa San Bernardo (I.E.S.B).

Figure 2. Students' reading preferences at the language center of Universidad de
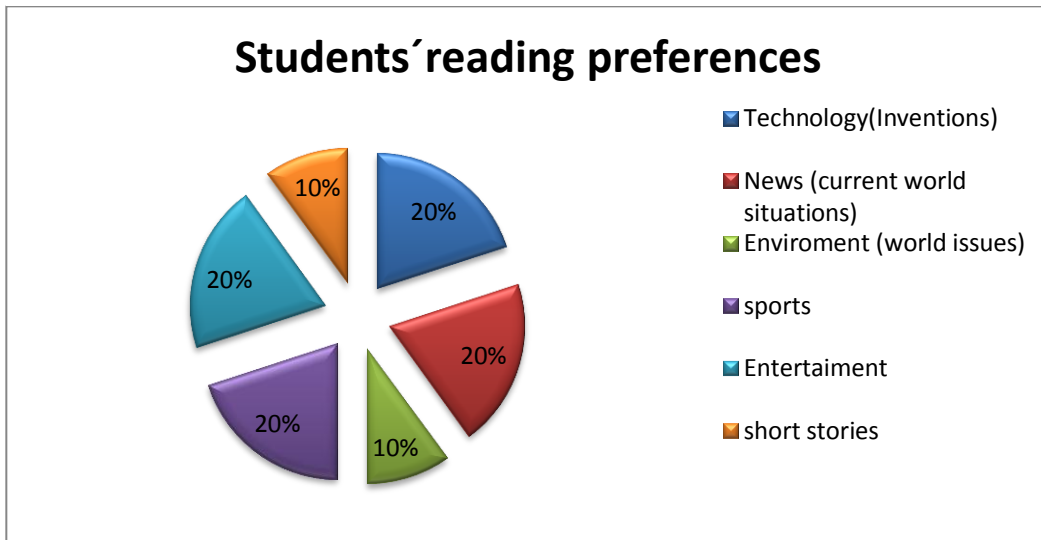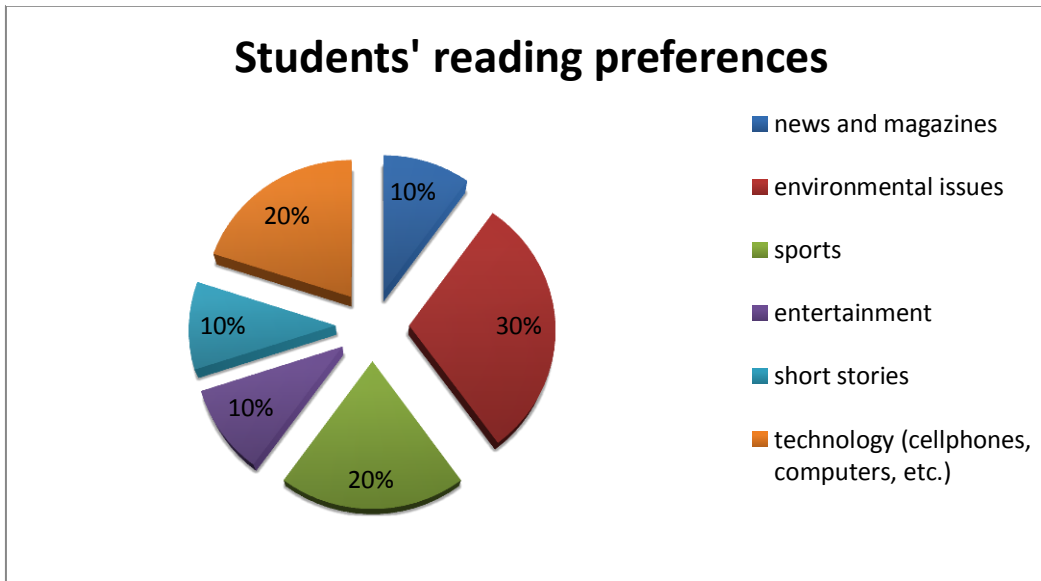Cordoba.

Figure 3. Students' reading preferences at I.E.S.B.

After collecting this information, it was decided to select the most suitable authentic

reading texts for the design the reading tasks based upon students' desires.

In the following stage, the students' reflections in the journal and questions 1 and 8

of the post questionnaire were compared to find out whether the students enjoyed or not the

selected topics and also to find out how the design of the reading tasks based on authentic

texts contributed to improve or not the reading comprehension level of students.

Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 show the students' opinions stated in their journals about the

topics presented in the different reading tasks used during the intervention.

Figure 4. Number of students who enjoyed the topic of the authentic texts at the Language
Center of Universidad de Cordoba
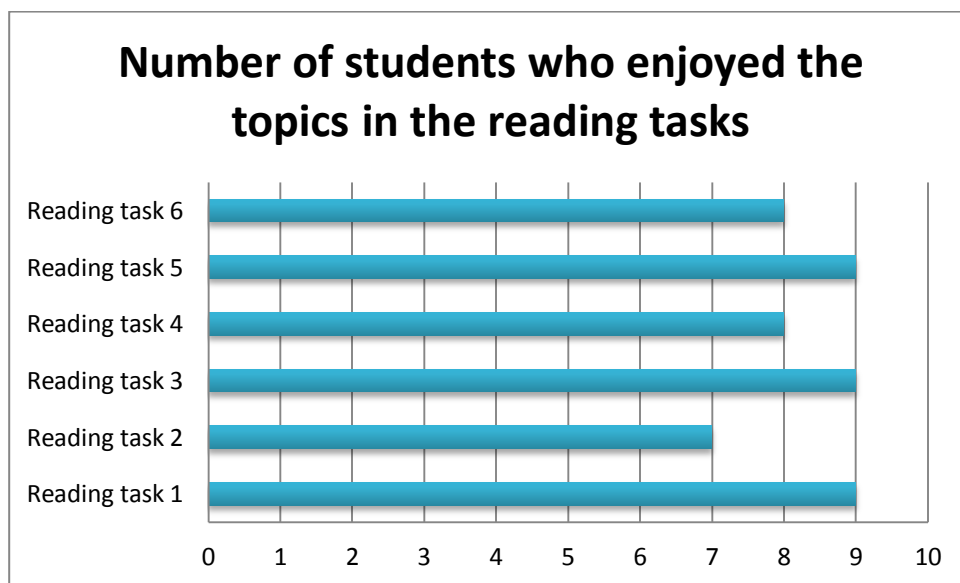
Figure 5. Number of students who did not enjoy the topic of the authentic texts at the Language Center of Universidad de Cordoba.
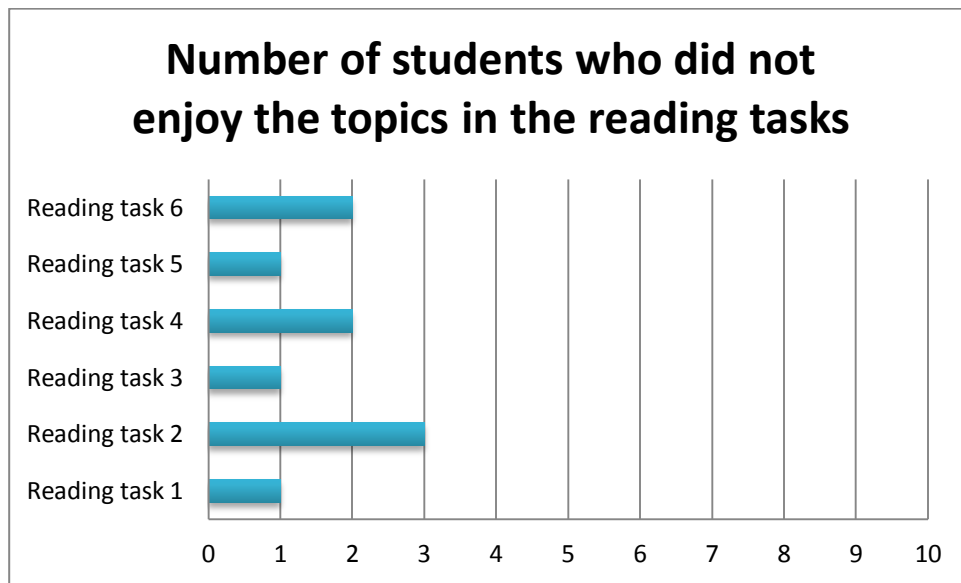
Figure 6. Number of students who enjoyed the topic of the authentic texts at I.E.S.B.
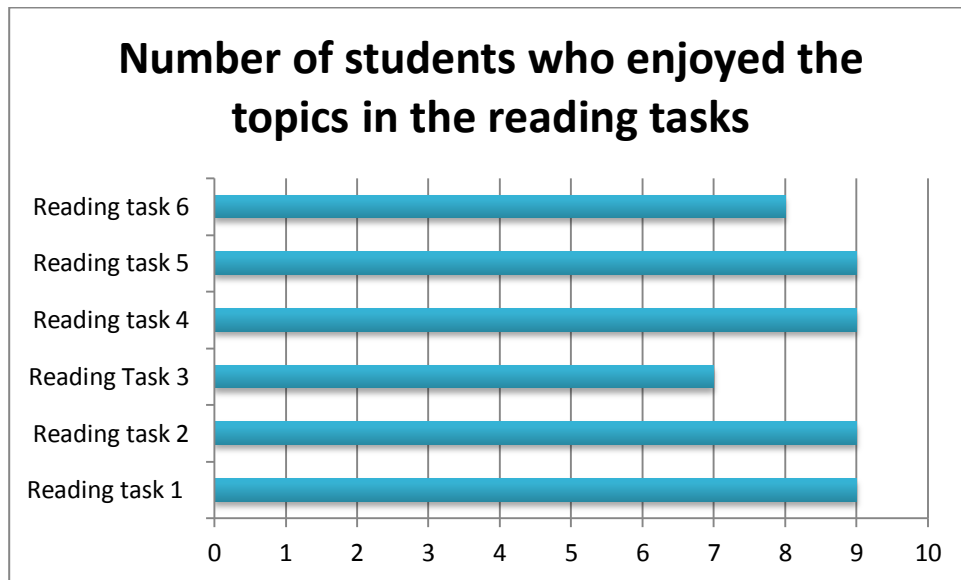
Figure 7. Number of students who did not enjoy the topic of the authentic texts at I.E.S.B.
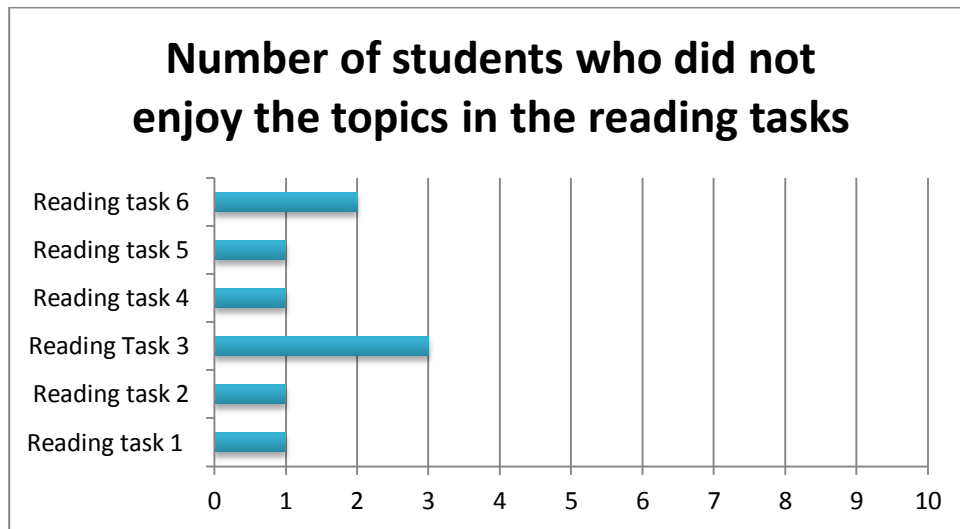
Figures 8 and 9 show the level of interest showed by the students of both contexts

towards the reading tasks developed.

Figure 8. Results of question 1 of the post questionnaire (Language Center of Universidad de Cordoba)
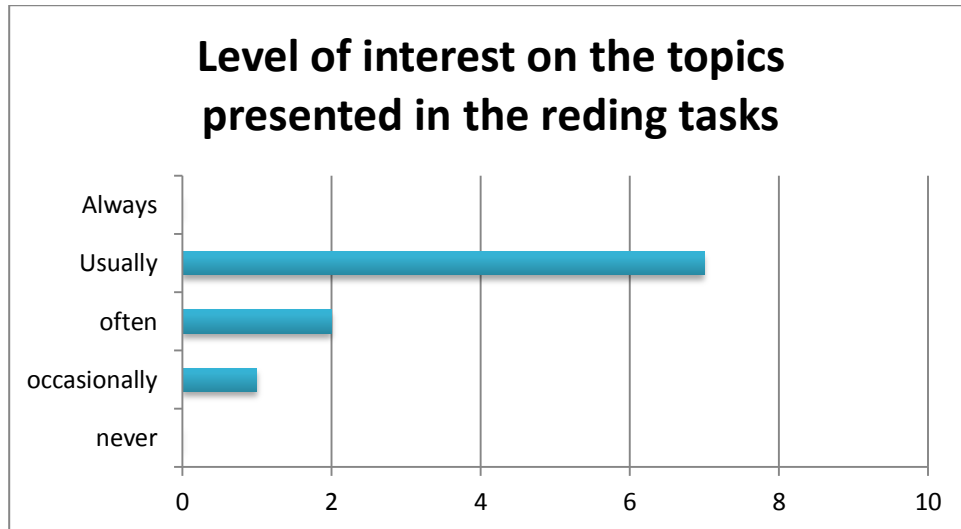
Figure 9. Results of question 1 of the post questionnaire (I.E.S.B.)
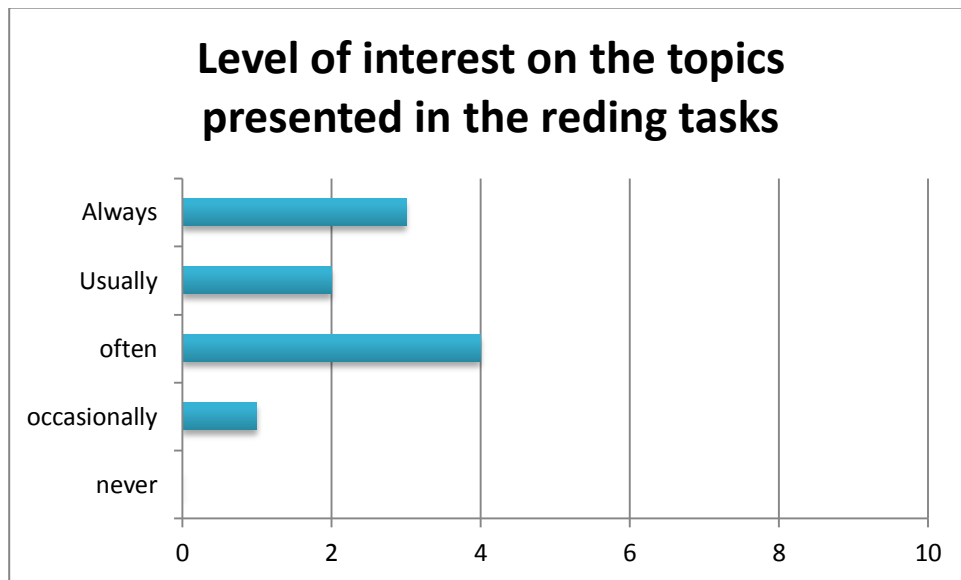
The results shown in the figures above were also compared with the opinions stated

by the students in questions 1 of the post questionnaire in order to triangulate all that data

and validate the information obtained.

The reflections that the students of both contexts stated along their journals as well as questions 1 and 8 of the post-questionnaire support the expectation that reading tasks using authentic texts really promote the development of better reading comprehension levels in the learners.

Besides that, it can be noticed that the results of the post-questionnaire shown in the previous figures, as well as the journal reflections are not exactly the same in the two contexts. However, the tendency in regards to the students' opinions towards the use of authentic texts in their reading tasks is very positive.

5.2. The use of Reading Strategies

Another relevant aspect to bear in mind for the analysis in this study has to do with the use of reading strategies. The results got from the pre-questionnaire and the pre-interview could provide useful information about the use of reading strategies that the students were performing consciously and unconsciously before the pedagogical intervention for this research study. One of the main purposes of the pre-questionnaire and the pre-interview was to gather evidence to verify whether the students were aware or not about the use of reading strategies such as: Answering questions and elaborative interrogation, activating prior knowledge, using visual graphics and graphics organizers, and inference. Items 3,5,6, from the pre questionnaire are unfolded. Table 5 shows the results obtained at the Language Center of Universidad de Cordoba and at Institución Educativa San Bernardo.

Table 5. Pre-Questionnaire Results. Questions 3, 5 and 6.

Item	Language Center Universidad de Córdoba					I.E.S.B				
	Never	occasionally	often	usually	Always	Never	Occasionally	Often	Usually	Always
3 When I start reading: I read the title of the reading, look for familiar words and take a look at the images of the text before reading it.	10%	20%	30%	20%	20%	0%	0%	10%	20%	70%
5 Before reading a text I think about the best strategy to understand it.	10%	0%	30%	30%	30%	10%	10%	10%	30%	40%
6 I take into account my previous knowledge before and during the reading exercise.	10%	40%	20%	10%	20%	0%	10%	0%	40%	50%

The results shown suggest for this particular category that a good amount of

students were consciously or unconsciously using different reading strategies in both

contexts. According to the data collected, the use of previous knowledge and inference

from titles and images were the two most common reading strategies used by the students

before developing the reading tasks with authentic texts.

The results shown in the pre-interview also support this fact. As it can be noticed in

figures 10 and 11 below, a sixty percent (60%) of the students interviewed at the language

Center of Universidad de Cordoba and an eighty percent (80%) of the students interviewed

at I.E.S.B., declare that they had used reading strategies like: inference and previous

knowledge to understand easily the texts before being exposed to the reading tasks planned

in this research. This information provides insights which help to support the idea that

before the pedagogical intervention stage, some students were already reading strategies.

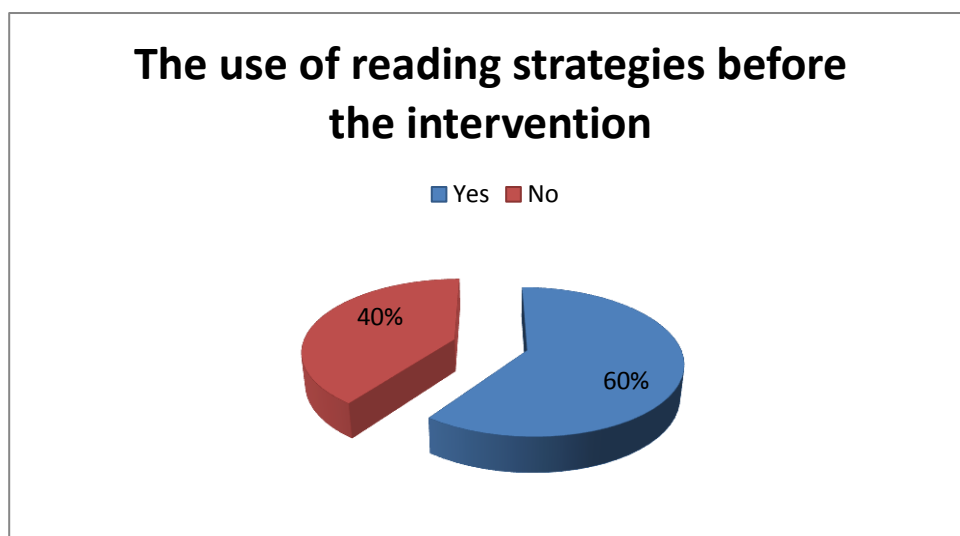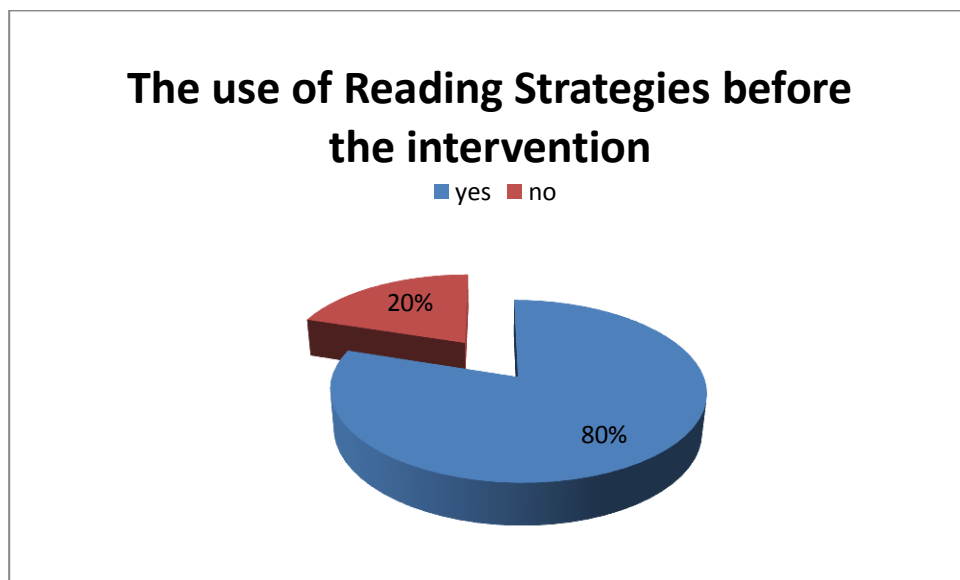Figure 10. Pre- interview results- Langauge Center of Universidad de Cordoba.

Figure 11. Pre- interview results- I.E.S.B.

As it was stated before, the students kept a journal during the intervention. They
were supposed to complete it after carrying out the different reading tasks each week. One
of the purposes of keeping this journal was to identify the steps that students followed to
complete each reading task. The students had to reflect on different issues including a
detailed description of the steps and strategies followed to complete the reading task.
Below we show some of the journal reflections stated by four learners (Two students from
each context) on item number 4 from the journal. In order to see the structure of the journal
that the students had to complete, (*see appendix G*).

" *The steps that I followed were: look up unfamiliar words try to guess and
looking for not using the dictionary or translator and read with patience*"

S1 Language Center- Universidad de Cordoba-Journal reflections task 2

"*The steps were: I based on my knowledge about the Global Warming and its
consequences. I read the reading trying to understand and remember what I have read.*"

S3 Language Center- Universidad de Cordoba- Journal reflections task 2

"*Steps were as follows: First I read the first part and made predictions and
respectively followed the steps and instructions. Second, I read the text on the history of
sport and based on the questions I answered in the text. Finally, I performed the part where
I had to follow the instructions and make the document.*"

S3 I.E.S.B.-Journal reflections task 1.

"*The strategies I used were to look the images and identify the key words and make
myself a general idea of the text before developing the exercises*"

S8 I.E.S.B. Journal reflections task 6.

These are just some of the opinions stated by the students in their journals. However,
after analyzing all the journals' responses, it can be drawn the following conclusions:

a) The results shown in the personal journal concur with the results provided by the
students in the preliminary interview. This suggests that students used reading
strategies unconsciously   and consciously.

b) Findings indicate that the most common strategies that students used were:
Predicting and the use of previous knowledge.

The post-questionnaire would also provide information about how the students
perceived their reading comprehension process after using the different reading strategies
that were suggested in the different reading tasks and also the reading strategies that they
decided to use by their own.   The main objective of using this post-questionnaire was to
know the number of students that used reading strategies such as: Answering questions and
elaborative interrogation, activating prior knowledge, using visual graphics and graphics
organizers, and inference, would increase and also they would have a better perception of
their own reading comprehension process after using different reading strategies during the
pedagogical intervention. Figures 12 and 13 provide a more clear idea about this issue.

Figure 12. Post-questionnaire results (thinking about the best strategy to read the texts**.**)-
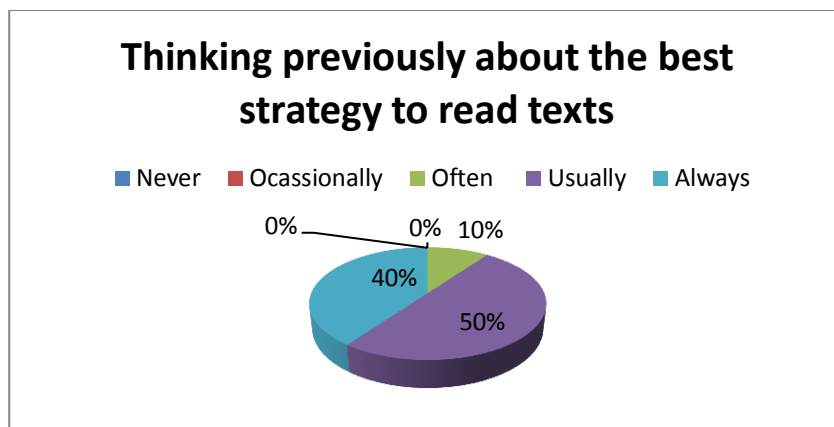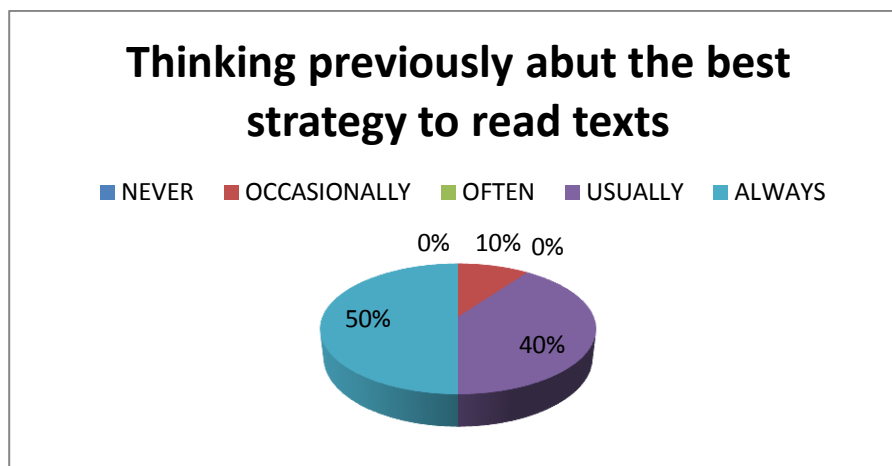Language center of Universidad de Cordoba.

Figure 13. Post-questionnaire results (thinking about the best strategy to read the texts)-
I.E.S.B.

5.3. The use of a social network to promote self-direction

The idea of supporting self-direction can allow learners to open doors to work into

nontraditional learning environments. Having used a social network to do the

implementation of this research project might provide students with opportunities to

develop reading tasks in a different way.

The main idea of using a social network to work on the reading tasks was to confirm

the assumption that the normal or traditional teaching practices that the students were

developing before the intervention were not taking them to develop self-direction as they

were based on traditional teacher-centered practices. Items 1 and 10 of the pre-

questionnaire support this view:

Table 6. Pre-Questionnaire Results. Frequency of English Reading Out of the Class and
Self- Evaluation of Reading Strategies.

Question or item	Language Center Universidad de Córdoba					Institución Educativa San Bernardo				
	Never	occasionally	Often	usually	always	Never	occasionally	often	usually	always
I read text in English when I am not in the English class.	10%	60%	20%	10%	0%	10%	60%	20%	10%	0%
After reading a text I self-evaluate the strategy that I used to see if it worked or not.	40%	30%	10%	30%	0%	10%	40%	20%	20%	10%

On the other hand, in the post - questionnaire, see figures 14 and 15 below, results

suggest that after using the *Edmodo* platform, the students' reading strategies to work

autonomously increased considerably in both contexts.

Figure 14. Post-questionnaire results. (Perception of the reading strategies used to work autonomously after using Edmodo- Language center of Universidad de Cordoba).

Perception of the reading strategies used to work autonomously after using Edmodo

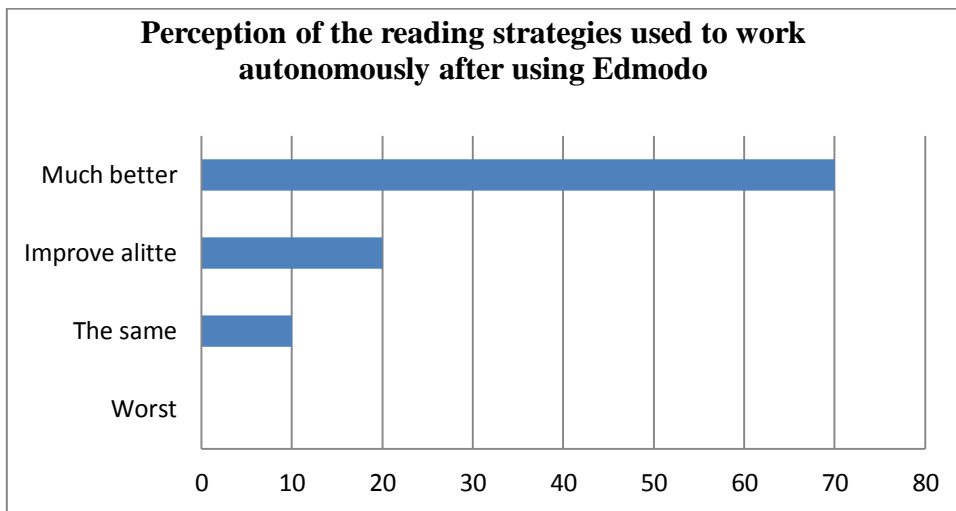|	
Much better	70
Improve alitte	20
The same	10
Worst	

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80)

Figure 15. Post-questionnaire results. (Perception of the reading strategies used to work autonomously after using Edmodo- I.E.S.B).

Perception of the reading strategies used to work autonomously after using Edmodo

MUCH BETTER	100
IMPROA LITTLE	
THE SAME	
WORST	

(x-axis: 0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100)
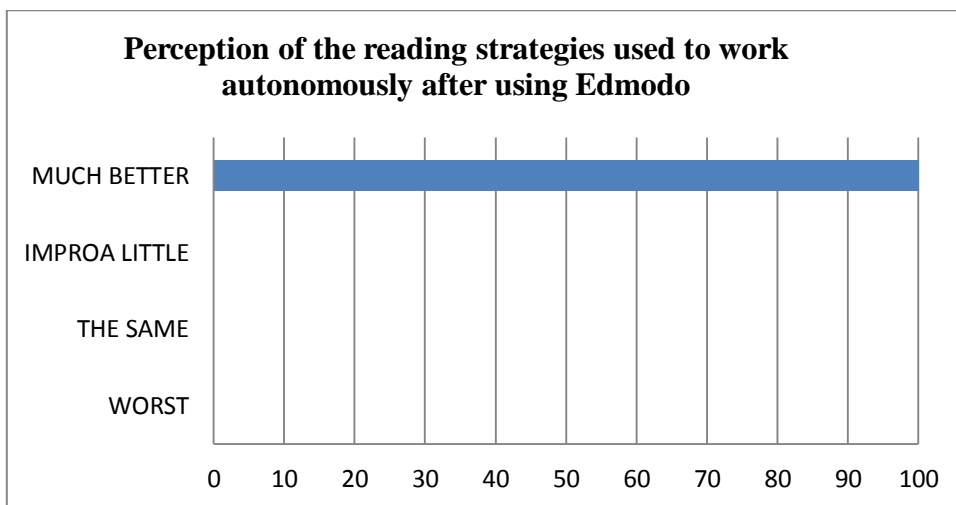
The information provided above let us assume that a great amount of the students in

both contexts perceived a significant change in their view about how through the use of

Edmodo they could develop more their autonomy and their self-directed skills.

The last part of this section will be devoted to analyze the results of the post reading

test obtained by the students in the two contexts. These results will be useful when drawing

conclusions because through them we can compare how much the reading comprehension

process of the students improved after working on some reading tasks using authentic texts.

Table 7. Reading Comprehension Post-Test Results, in the Sample Group from the
Language Center in Universidad de Cordoba.

#S	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Grades	65	73	85	70	83	85	70	85	65	70
Mean: 75.1%										
School´s rating scale										
0-49				Poor						
50-69				Fair						
70-90				Good						
91-100				Excellent						

Table 8. Reading Comprehension Post-Test Results, in the Sample Group from the
Institución Educativa San Bernardo.

#S	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10
Grades	3,0	4,0	4,5	3,3	3,0	4,0	3,5	4,0	3,5	3,5
Mean: 3,63										
School´s rating scale										
1-2,9				Poor						
3,0-3,5				Fair						
3,6-4,5				Good						
4,6-5,0				Excellent						

Chapter Six: Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications Limitations and Further

Research

6.1. Conclusions

This research study allowed us to reflect on different theoretical considerations

related to the improvement of the reading comprehension levels of our students, placed in

two different contexts but with similar background language level. This research study also

allowed us to find out whether   the use of reading tasks using authentic texts supported by

the use of non-traditional learning environments could help to improve the teaching

methodologies and the quality of instruction at Centro de Ingles-Universidad de Cordoba in

Monteria, Colombia and at Institución Educativa San Bernardo in Montelibano-Colombia.

For this case, the research question that guided the development of this study in both

contexts was: *How does the use of reading tasks using authentic materials enhance reading*

comprehension in students of pre-intermediate level? The data collected along this study

allowed the identification of three different categories that helped to give an answer to this

research question.

The main conclusion that could be drawn from this research was that a meaningful

improvement in the reading comprehension level of the students that took part on the study

could be noticed if we analyze the results of the pre and post reading test applied to these

students, before and after implementing the reading tasks based on authentic texts *(see tables 2, 3, 7 and 8).*

Regarding the use of reading strategies through reading tasks, it could be concluded from the study that before the intervention, the students were already using unconsciously different reading strategies such as: Drawing inferences, predicting and using previous knowledge. After the intervention and based on the opinion stated by the students in their personal journals as well as on the results of the post questionnaire, it could be concluded that the number of students who used the reading strategies mentioned before increased considerably.

Another important conclusion of this study has to do with the use of reading tasks based on authentic texts as the motivating factor to read. From this issue it can be concluded that the choices of topics made for designing the reading tasks were suitable in terms of task difficulty and interest on the topics of the authentic texts. This was possible due to the results of the pre-questionnaire and pre-interview where the students could state their opinions about their reading preferences. According to Krashen (1987), if teachers provide learners with interesting texts to read, they will enjoy them and as a result they will acquire the language easily. For this reason, it can be said that the input or material selected to develop the intervention kept a relation with the English level and preferences of the learners.

The last but not least important conclusion of this study has to do with the

promotion of self-direction through the use of *Edmodo*. From this issue, it can be concluded

that before the intervention took place, this group of students were used to teacher centered

classes and as a result were teacher dependent. After developing the six reading tasks using

Edmodo as the platform and social network to interact and develop the tasks, the students

gave their first steps towards the development of self-direction keeping consciousness of

the importance and benefits of developing this kind of strategies. This study can be taken as

an example of an innovative proposal for developing similar courses in a more interesting

way, encouraging learners to assume a more active and responsible role in their own

learning process due to all the advantages offered by *Edmodo*.

6.2. Pedagogical Implications

The use of reading tasks using authentic texts brought many benefits to the

academic achievement, particularly in the reading comprehension level of the two groups

of learners that took part in the intervention (Students from the Centro de Inglés at

Universidad de Cordoba and students from the English club of Institución Educativa San

Bernardo). Besides that, the use of non-traditional learning environments such as the social

network *Edmodo*, allowed to the learners the acquisition and development of different

learning strategies intended to take them to be self-directed learners. The different theories,

experiences and related studies developed in this and other similar fields (Snow (2002);

Peacock (1997); Echeverry and McNulty (2010); Matsubara and Lehtinen (2007); Rubio

and Serrat (2010), among others) were taken as the basis through which it was thought that

the learners could improve their reading comprehension processes thanks to the use of

reading tasks and authentic texts.

It can be stated that the use of authentic texts could increase students' motivation

towards reading and due to that it might favor learners' reading comprehension. These

types of texts are not designed for teaching purposes. That is why, it is important to

highlight that teachers should try as much as possible, to adapt them according to the

students' age, level and preferences.

During the intervention, it is suggested that teachers keep a close contact with the

students through *Edmodo* or any other platform used in order to give to the students the

support about the best strategies to be used in each reading task.

6.3. Limitations

This research study has supported learners in the process of improving their reading

comprehension levels by implementing tasks based on authentic texts as well as fostering

self-direction in two groups of pre intermediate students.   The results obtained in this study

showed significant benefits of using this kind of texts as a motivating factor to help

students to succeed in comprehending. However, there were a couple of drawbacks during

the development of the study.

The first and the most important difficulty was related to the familiarization of the students with the *Edmodo* platform. Even though it is a social network similar to Facebook, most of the students had not heard about it before. The students spent a lot of time to get familiarized with it. At the moment of uploading their products, the students sometimes preferred to send them to the tutors' mail since some of them found it difficult to upload them in the host site. Some others forgot their passwords or user names among other problems. This situation caused a lot emailing to the tutors by the learners, in order to get answers for their doubts. A possible solution for this drawback is to look for tutorials on how to use the site (Edmodo) or prepare those tutorials and upload them on the internet in case they do not exist.

The second drawback had to do with the students' lack of time to develop the reading tasks. In both groups of students we found that the students sometimes did not upload the activities on time because they had to attend other issues related to their schools. For this reason, it was common to find students asking for postponing the dates to deliver their tasks. This situation might be avoided if we provide students, through *Edmodo,* with videos or tips on how to improve their own time management skills and succeed in the development of the reading tasks.

6.4. Further Research

To work on a replication of this study, it is advisable to reflect upon the data collection tools that might be used. This can mean a shortcut at the moment of analyzing

and coding data. For example: instead of using a pre interview and a pre questionnaire to gather preliminary information, a complete needs analysis can be done, in order to cover a wide range of aspects. Furthermore, it is recommended to shorter the length of the reading tasks because the students needed to devote a lot of time on their development.

In addition to this, future studies can concentrate not only on the use of reading tasks as a motivating factor to improve reading comprehension, but also on how the use of social networks as platforms for students to develop their tasks can foster self-direction.

Finally, it is important to take into account that the use of a social network like this requires from teachers and researchers interested in using this kind of platforms to implement the reading tasks, the acquisition and necessary training in the use, design of materials and provision of tutorials and instructions to the learners who will be using this kind of technological tools.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Consent Letters for parents

Appendix B: Pre-reading test

PRE-READING TEST

Name:_____ **Date:**_____

Read the article and choose the correct answer.

The best public transportation system in the world.

Curitiba in Brazil is no ordinary city; it has the best public transportation system in the world. Mayor Jaime Lerner, along with the city council, began developing the world famous system in 1971.

Mr. Lerner had grown up in Curitiba and knew that the street was an important part of city life for the residents.

He made many of the streets into pedestrian areas, with no access for cars. The city council put in flowers, lights, and kiosks where people could sell food and other products. To encourage shoppers to use the new areas, the mayor gave away free paper so that local children could paint pictures in the street. Cyclists also benefit from 150 km of bike lanes that follow old river valleys and train tracks around the city.

Mr. Lerner realized that to increase the development and growth of the city in the future, the public transportation system also had to improve. Buses were chosen as the main transportation because it was the cheapest. Curitiba's transportation system now consists of over 300 routes that use around 1,900 buses to carry approximately 1.9 million passengers every day. Approximately 60 km of the roads are for buses only, so traffic jams are unusual. Bus travel is faster and more convenient than using private cars.

The city now uses 30 percent less fuel than other large cities in Brazil and people spend only about 10 percent of their yearly salary on transportation costs. Some of the buses are able to carry 170–270 passengers.

School buses are yellow, and buses for disabled people are blue. They are designed with three doors (two exits and one entrance) so that people can get on and off quickly. Bus stations provide free maps and facilities to help parents with young children and people carrying heavy bags to board the buses easily. Passengers buy a ticket at the office in advance and then wait for their bus,

as they would in a subway station. Because of the success of Curitiba's public transportation

system, Jaime Lerner now offers advice to city councils around the world on how they can solve their cities' transportation problems.

Answer the questions that appear below. Use the following example as a guide:

Curitiba has one of the best public transportation systems in the world.

A True ■ ✓ □B False ■ □C Doesn't say ■

1 Curitiba is different from other cities in the world.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

2 Jaime Lerner spent a lot of time playing on the streets when he was a child.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

3 The city council allows people to sell things in the pedestrian areas.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

4 All the kiosks sell local food and products.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

5 The city council chose to increase the bus service because it was the least expensive type of transportation.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

6 The population of the city is about 1.9 million.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

7 Other large Brazilian cities are planning to cut the amount of fuel they use.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

8 The buses are different colors according to what they are used for.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

9 Passengers buy their tickets as they get on the buses.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

10 Mr. Lerner enjoys being an expert in developing public transportation systems.
A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

Adapted from: American English File 3. Oxford. Oxford University press

Appendix C. Preliminary- Interview

Defining and Implementing teaching strategies to foster Self-Directed Language Learning in Colombia
Anaheim online
Universidad de la Sabana **Learning Strategies- Reading Interview**

INDIVIDUAL READING INTERVIEW	
NAME:	**DATE:**
Do you read in English? How often?	
Do you like reading in English? Why or why not?	
Do you establish plans to read in English? Which one(s)?	
Do you self-evaluate your plans after reading? How do you do that?	
Do you take into account your previous knowledge when reading? Is it useful for you?	
When you are reading and you find a word that you do not know, what do you do?	
What makes reading easy or difficult for you?	
How useful do you find considering the title of the text, images and familiar words to understand a reading?	
What kind of reading material (short stories, news, sport articles, etc.) do you prefer? Why?	

Appendix D. Pre-Questionnaire

Defining and Implementing teaching strategies to foster
Self-Directed Language Learning in Colombia

Universidad de la Sabana
Anaheim University

Learning Strategies- Reading Questionnaire

Reading is a common activity that you develop in your English classes. You usually read short articles, conversations, stories, news and advertisement as part of your learning process.
Answer the following questionnaire saying how often do you use these strategies when reading material in English.

1. **I read text in English when I am not in the English class.**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

2. **The topics and readings of the book we follow are interesting for me**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

3. **When I start reading: I read the title of the reading, look for familiar words and take a look at the images of the text before reading it.**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

4. **Before reading a text I decide what will be the purpose of it.**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

5. **Before reading a text I think about the best strategy to understand it.**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

6. **I take into account my previous knowledge before and during the reading exercise.**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

7. **If I have to do an exercise based on the reading I first read the exercise and then I read the text.**

0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

8. **When I read I can find in the text the main and the supporting ideas**
0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always

9. **I make a written or mental summary of all the texts I read.**
0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always
10. **After reading a text I self-evaluate the strategy that I used to see if it worked or not.**
0 Never   0 occasionally   0 often   0 usually   0 always
Thanks for your time

Appendix E. Reading task 1

**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

Name of co-researcher: **Sandra Hortúa**	
University Code Number: **20112250**	
Institution: Centro de Idiomas- Universidad de Córdoba	

Date of Class: DAY   MONTH
 	
YEAR
 	
          29   07   2012
 	
          05   08   2012
	Time of Class:
	
	Length of class: 180 minutes
	
	Time Frame:
	
	     A 45 minute class for instruction and 120 minutes of independent work

Class/grade: Pre.- intermediate students	**Room:** Edmodo Virtual Learning Room (Reading group-English Club)
Number of students: 10 Students	**Average age of Students:** 13-16 years old
Number of years of English study: 8 years	**Level of students**

	A1 A2 <mark>B1</mark> B2 C1 C2
Lesson Number	**Research Circle Leader:** Maritza Housset

1	**2**	**3**	**4**
5	**6**	**7**	**8**

Set Lesson Goals

Genre: *Online article*

      This kind of texts gives information about a topic. In this case, it provides information about some events that gave origin to the Olympic Games and their evolution. Moreover, it uses pictures and situates facts in historical terms.

Language Goal	**Assessment Criteria**
- Students will be aware of the use of some reading strategies such as: predicting, skimming, and scanning in order to develop the different exercises proposed in a task. - Students will learn some vocabulary about sports and the names of some countries. - Students will create a power point presentation with 10 Olympic Games played nowadays.	Students will evidence if they achieve the goals through the worksheet answers and also through the power point presentation they will create.
Learning to Learn Goal	**Assessment Criteria**
-Students will guess what the text is about, skim the text to have a general idea of it and scan to answer some reading comprehension questions. -Students will create a power point presentation with 10 Olympic Games played nowadays.	The tools to determine if the students achieved the reading goal will be the worksheet which has the answers to the activities, and the power point they will create.

Identify a topic for the lesson

The topic about **" the history of sport",** was chosen after applying students a questionnaire and an interview in which they were asked what topics did they prefer to read and most of them, said that they liked to read about sports.

This is an authentic text, because we want students to learn the Language used in real life.

Materials

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 of appropriate level materials (video, audio, worksheets, copies, online resources, etc.) to support your goals. Include copies of your materials and number them.

Material 1 Name: Reading Task : **The history of sports**	Rationale: This reading task was designed taking into account learners' needs, interest, their previous knowledge, as well as, the need for improving their reading comprehension level.	Annex
Material 2 Name: **Personal Journal**	Rationale: The proposal of using a journal at the end of every lesson is for students to reflect on their reading comprehension process, the time they spend doing the task, the problems they had, if they enjoy the topic or not, and the steps they followed to do the task.	Annex

Assumed knowledge:

This group of Pre intermediate students has been taking English classes as an independent course from the school for 3 years. They have taken about 180 hours on Saturdays since they have started these classes. These sessions at the English center lasts for 4 hours each Saturday having a break of half an hour. The main purpose of these classes is to reinforce speaking skills. Even though, course books are suitable to work the four skills.

It can be assumed that learners have had chances to learn about the history of sports in their physical education classes at school. Some of the students have learnt of that topic in the target language and some other have studies it in the L1. Ii is seen that Most of the language presented in the authentic text is easy to be understood due to; students' level of proficiency was taken into account. Furthermore, they have some previous knowledge in the topic. Moreover, these learners also have had the opportunities to put into practice different reading strategies such predicting and summarizing, in previous reading activities carried out in the classroom. Finally, it can be argued that previous training in this kind of topic and previous activities worked it out that way, will offer positives insights to develop the reading tasks that are uploaded at ed.modo platform.

It is good to state that most of these learners know how to design a brochure using Microsoft Publisher.

Description of language item / skill(s)

Form	Past simple / present simple/ passive voice.
Meaning	Inform the reader about the history of sports
Use	
Skill(s) and sub skill(s)	Reading
(For CLIL) **Content Communication** **Cognition Culture**	

Sequence the lesson to accomplish both of your goals

Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction	Teacher's comments
Preparation (1) (Facilitatio n SDL/Starting Process + Raising Awareness + Socialization/Getting to know each other)	To inform the learners about the objectives for developing the activity. To empower students to use reading strategies for improving their reading comprehension. To guess what the text will be about by asking them their previous knowledge of the history of sport.	-Students will be asked what reading strategies, they usually use. -Teacher will ask them what they know about the history of sport and also to identify some sports. -Students will brainstorm some ideas about what they think the text will be about.	20 minutes Teacher-Students	
Presenta tion Modeling (2) (Teacher's	To give students some examples about how to use the reading strategies presented in the task.	Teacher will model students how to use the reading strategies proposed in this task as well as, how to do some of the activities presented in the reading task.	30 minutes Teacher-Students	

Modeling/Presenting	To solve some doubts that students can have about the activity.	If students have any doubt or questions about the activity, teacher will answer those questions.		
Practice **(3)** **(Individual** **Self-directed** **Work/Opportunities** **to Practice +** **Facilitation of** **Collaborative self-** **directed learning** **teams/Practice** **Opportunities)**	To motivate students to develop the activities on edmodo. To ask students to do a ppt in which they show information about the player that they like the most.	In this stage, the learners will be encouraged to work independently on the reading task taking into account the brainstorm carried out previously and also the presentation made by the teacher about how to develop the whole task. During this time the learners use the different strategies suggested and some others of their own to develop the different activities proposed in this reading task. If they consider it necessary they can receive some support from their partners or from the teacher. Once they have developed all the activities proposed in the reading task, the learners have to design a power point presentation in which they show information about the player that they like the most.	120 minutes Individual self-directed work Student-student interaction can take place	

Learner self-evaluation (4) (Assessing collaborative work)	To use the personal journal to reflect about their performance in this reading task.	At the end of the task, the students will take the personal journal uploaded in edmodo to reflect about their performance in this reading task taking into account the aspects that they are encouraged to reflect about in this journal	15 minutes Teacher-Students students-Students	
Problem Identification/ solution (5) (Sharing and discussion on strategies)	To motivate learners to use the reading strategies suggested in case they have some problems to understand the text. To provide learners with video tutorials about how to design an excellent power point presentation.	The learners might have some problems for understanding certain words in the text. If this is the case the learners will be asked to use the reading strategy *guessing from context* in order to overcome the problem. The learners might also have some problems to design the power point at the end of the task. In this case they can send an e-mail to the teacher who can suggest some video tutorials about how to design a power point presentation or they can use other tools to do their presentation such us calameo or bookr.	10 minutes Teacher-students	Look for some tutorial videos about how to design brochures
Expansi	To ask	By the end of the week the learners have to upload the answers to the task,	5 minutes	

on (6)	learners to use the knowledge and skills gained here during the development of other tasks.	their power point presentation and their journal to *Edmodo*. The teacher will comment on their posts and will ask them to use all the knowledge and skills gained after developing this task with similar materials related to those or to other topics.	Teacher-students	

Teacher Evaluation of his/her lesson plan

Taking into account the language and reading comprehension goals considered to plan this lesson, the text and task prepared for this lesson is the one presented in *annex 1*.

This lesson plan was carefully designed considering different key aspects such as: learners' reading preferences, language level of learners, reading strategies that are pretended to be promoted, etc.

REFERENCE

- Rubin, J. Lesson Planner (2012)
- ICELT Lesson Plan Template

Appendix F. Reading Task Sample

<div align="center">

Reading Task # 1

</div>

Part A (Before reading)

1. **Write the names of the following sports:**
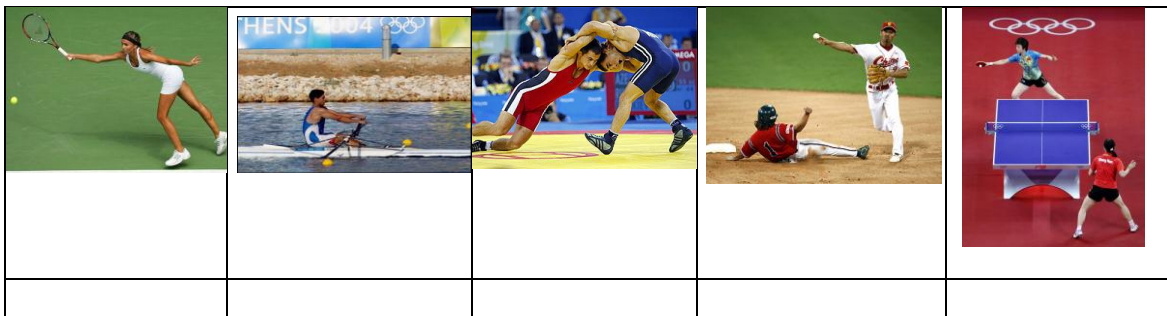
2. **Look at the title of the following text and the previous illustrations. Use them to predict what the text will be about:**

3. **Brainstorm possible ideas and possible information that you might find on the text. Write them in the chart below:**

Part B (While reading)

4. **Take some minutes to read the following text:**

History of Sports

Sports have been the most popular form of recreation for people since time immemorial. To jot down the conclusive history of sports in a short summary is an impractical proposition. For gaining true insight, one needs to dig historically to reach every nook, corner and township in different parts of the globe. The scope and vastness of sports and its history make it impossible to point to a date that marks D-day in the world of sports.

The true spirit and recognition of sports at the international level took place with the introduction of Olympic games in Greece. Ancient Olympics refer to a legend called Hercules, son of Zeus, as being the founder of Olympic games. Written records point to first Olympic games being held in 776 BC. Historians believe that games were held much earlier than the recorded times. We have all heard about Coroebus who won the only sprint event held at the Olympics by running a distance of 192 meters.

Ancient Olympics had two major events—the Equestrian and the Pentathlon events and it later added events like jumping, running, wresting, javelin and discus (disc throwing). The Equestrian events introduced chariot racing and riding.

Olympic games were held every four years for around 1200 years. The Roman Emperor Theodosius banned Olympic events in 393 CE owing to the game's pagan origin. Some 1500 years later, the Olympic games found revival with serious efforts by a Frenchman called Pierre de Coubertin. His efforts to rouse sports enthusiasm in France were initially met with scepticism and controversy. However, Coubertin was not to give up his attempts so easily.

It was in 1890 that he established an organization called USFSA (Union des Sociétés Francaises de Sports Athlétiques). In a meeting of the USFSA in Paris on November 25, 1892, Coubertin voiced his desire to revive Olympic games with a popular speech. The speech did not invoke any serious interest. Two years later, in a meeting attended by 79 delegates from nine countries, he again proposed the idea and it arose interest this time. The delegates at the conference unanimously voted for hosting Olympic games and Athens was chosen as the venue to restart the events.

Modern day Olympic games include sport events like, Badminton, Baseball, Basketball, Beach Volleyball, Boxing Archery, Canoeing & Cycling, Diving, Equestrian, Fencing, Field Hockey, Gymnastics, Judo, Modern Pent, Mountain Biking, Rhythmic Gym, Rowing, Sailing, Shooting, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Swim, Table Tennis, Taekwondo, Team Handball, Tennis, Track & Field, Trampoline, Triathlon, Water Polo, Weightlifting, and Wrestling.

The International Federations are non-government organizations acclaimed by International Olympic Committee for managing sports at the international level. These Federations are responsible for applying rules and ensuring the integrity of Olympic sport.

A glance at major Olympic events since 1896:

Year	Venue
1896	Athens
1900	Paris
1904	St. Louis
1906	Athens (unofficial)
1908	London
1912	Stockholm
1916	Not held
1920	Antwerp
1924	Paris
	Amsterdam

Year	Venue
1928	
1932	Los Angeles
1936	Berlin
1940	Not held
1944	Not held
1948	London
1952	Helsinki
1956	Melbourne
1960	Rome
1968	Mexico City
1972	Munich

Year	Venue
1976	Montreal
1980	Moscow
1984	Los Angeles
1988	Seoul
1992	Barcelona
1996	Atlanta
2000	Sydney
2004	Athens

Taken from: http://www.historyofsports.info/

5. Choose the best answer (Circle or highlight it) for the following questions:

a. Where and when did the original Olympic Games begin?
1. In Olympia in Ancient Greece in 776 BC.
2. In Paris in 1500
3. In Moscow in 1980

b. How often were the Olympic Games held?
1. The Olympic Games were held every four years
2. The Olympic Games were held every two years
3. The Olympic Games were held every three years

c. Which were the two major events that ancient Olympics had
1. The equestrian and the pentathlon
2. Jumping and running
3. Wresting and javelin

d. Who founded the Modern Olympics? When? Where?
1. Pierre de Coubertin founded the modern Olympics in Athens in 1896
2. Coroebus founded the modern Olympics in Paris in 776B.C
3. Hercules founded the modern Olympics in London in 776B.C

e. When was the original Olympiad first held?
1. 1776 B.C
2. 776 B.C
3. 1896

f. Who founded the Ancient Olympics?
1. Zeus
2. Hercules
3. Coroebus

g. In which city will the Olympics in 2012 be held?
1. Athens
2. London
3. Paris
4. Tokyo

h. How many times the Olympics have been held in London?
1. One
2. Three
3. Two

Part C (After reading)

6. Make a power point presentation where you include 10 Olympic sports played nowadays. Include pictures, names of the sports and mention some of the best players for each sport. Send the presentation to your teacher by e-mail or upload it to *Edmodo.*

Note: if you prefer you can do a poster by hand with the same information, take a photograph of it and upload it to Edmodo.

Appendix G. Personal Journal

PERSONAL JOURNAL

Use this journal to reflect and write about your own learning process through the different Reading tasks you have been developing. If you feel more comfortable writing in Spanish there is not any problem

Reflect on the following:

1. **How much time did you spend to develop the whole reading task?**

2. **Did you like the topic of the reading?**

3. **Was the reading task easy or difficult? What was the most difficult and the easiest part of the task?**

4. **What were the steps you followed to accomplish the task successfully?**

5. **Do you think your reading comprehension process is improving or is it the same?**
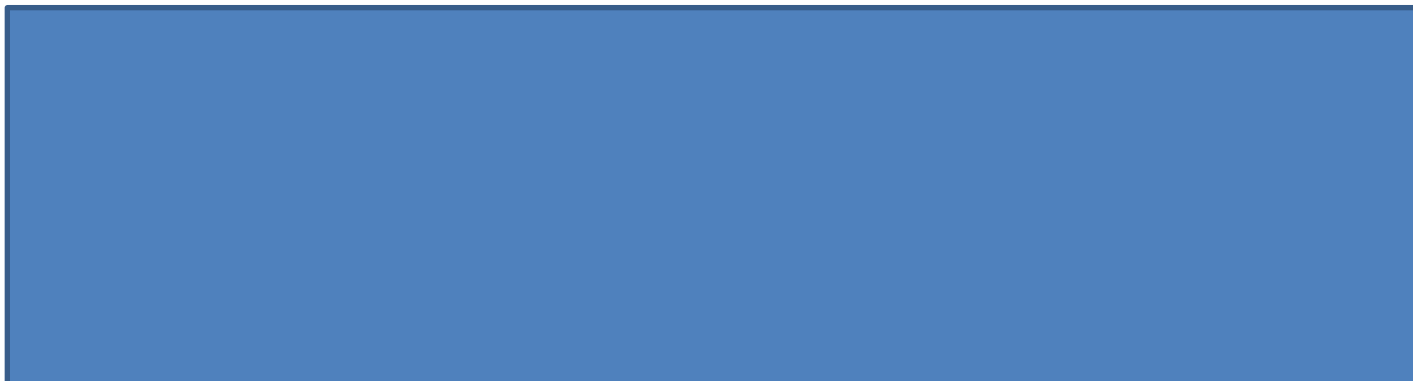
Appendix H. Post- Questionnaire

**Defining and Implementing teaching strategies to foster Self-Directed Language
Learning in Colombia
Universidad de la Sabana
Anaheim University**

Reading Questionnaire

Reading is a common activity that you develop in your English classes. You usually read short articles,
conversations, stories, news and advertisement as part of your learning process.

Answer the following questionnaire about how do you see your reading comprehension process after
working with authentic texts and receiving some training in different reading strategies.

1. **The topics and readings of the tasks I developed were interesting for me**
   Never ◯ occasionally ◯ often ◯ usually ◯ always ◯

2. **When I read the texts included in the tasks: I read the title of the reading, look for familiar words
   and took a look at the images of the text before reading it.**
   Never ◯ occasionally ◯ often ◯ usually ◯ always ◯

3. **Before reading a text I thought about the best strategy to understand it.**
   Never ◯ occasionally ◯ often ◯ usually ◯ always ◯

4. **I took into account my previous knowledge before and during the reading activity.**
   Never ◯ occasionally ◯ often ◯ usually ◯ always ◯

5. **After reading a text I self-evaluated the strategy/strategies that I used to see if it/they worked or
   not.**
   Never ◯ occasionally ◯ often ◯ usually ◯ always ◯

6. **The reading tasks that I developed were:**
   Easy ◯   more or less easy ◯   difficult ◯   extremely difficult ◯

7. **After the development of these reading tasks I consider that my reading comprehension is:**
   Worst ◯   the same ◯   Improved a little ◯   much better ◯

8. **I think that the use of authentic texts made my reading comprehension process to be:**
   Worst ◯   the same ◯   Improved a little ◯   much better ◯

9. **The reading strategies suggested in the different tasks made my reading process to be:**
   Worst ◯   the same ◯   Improved a little ◯   much better ◯

10. **After using the edmodo platform my strategies to work autonomously are:**
    Worst ◯   the same ◯   Improved a little ◯   much better ◯

Appendix I. Post-Reading test

POST-READING TEST

Universidad de La Sabana

Anaheim University

Name:_____ **Date:**_____

Read the article and choose the correct answer.

The new Hollywood? What is Bollywood?

"Bollywood" is the name of the enormous Hindi-language movie industry based in Mumbai, India. The

name is a mix of "Bombay" (now known as Mumbai) and "Hollywood."
Bollywood's output makes it the largest national movie industry in the world in terms both of the number of movies produced and the number of tickets sold, though not in terms of profit. In 2006, Bollywood movies sold 3.8 billion tickets worldwide and had total revenues (from theater tickets, DVDs, and television licensing) of $1.6 billion. In the same year, movies made in Hollywood sold 2.7 billion tickets but generated $51 billion. Bollywood attracts thousands of aspiring actors, all hoping for a lucky break. As in Hollywood, very few succeed. Only a tiny number of non-Indian actors make a mark in Bollywood, though many have tried.

History
The first silent movie was made in India in 1913. By the 1930s, the industry was producing over 200 movies a year. The first movie with dialogue, *Alam Ara*, was a huge hit. At first, romantic musicals were the most common type of movie, but in the 1960s, action movies began to appear and these became increasingly popular. However, in the early 1990s, the trend went back to family-friendly musicals. Bollywood is now a strong part of modern culture not only in India, but also in the rest of South Asia, the Middle East, and parts of Africa. It also has a large audience in the UK, Canada, and the US.

Money and challenges
Bollywood budgets can be low by Hollywood standards, and sets and special effects can be limited by this. As Western movies and TV programs gain popularity in India, however, there is more pressure for Bollywood movies to have higher production values. Movie crews from Mumbai now often film abroad, as audiences enjoy scenes shot overseas. The biggest challenges facing Bollywood in India are from satellite TV and foreign movies, which are all having a massive impact on the domestic entertainment scene. In the past, most Bollywood movies could make money. Now fewer do, but it is still a successful and increasingly international industry.

Answer the questions that appear below. Use the following example as a guide:

Mumbai used to be known as Bombay.

    A True ■ ✓ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

1 The name "Bollywood" is a combination of two words.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

2 Bollywood sells more tickets than any other movie industry.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

3 Bollywood's total revenue was higher in 2006 than in 2005.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

4 There are no non-Indian actors in Bollywood.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

5 The first Hollywood silent movie was made in 1917.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

6 People in India have always liked the same kind of movies.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

7 Bollywood movies are popular in many parts of the world.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

8 Bollywood movies cost much less to make than Hollywood movies.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

9 All Bollywood movies are set in India.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

10 There are more Bollywood fans in the UK than in the US.

    A True ■ ☐ B False ■ ☐ C Doesn't say ■

Adapted from: American English File. Oxford. Oxford University press.

Appendix J. Research project Timeline

Chronogram for the intervention-2012-2013

Activity	June	July	August	September	October	November	Decem	Feb	May	June
Design of questionnaires	■									
Application of First questionnaire and Interview	■									
Application of pre-reading test and analysis of results		■								
Design of reading Tasks		■								
Reading Task 1			▦							
Reading task 2			▦							
Reading task 3			▦							
Reading task 4			▦							
Reading task 5				▦						
Reading Task 6				▦						
Application of post-reading test				▦						
Application of the post questionnaire				▦						

Analysis of data collected																																	
Writing the first draft of the research paper																																	
Writing the final version of the research paper																																	