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"USEFUL TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE STUDENT'S ABILITIES TO READ IN  
ENGLISH: A STUDY CONDUCTED WITH THIRD GRADE STUDENTS IN THE  
OXFORD SCHOOL, SANTIAGO."

POR:

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## DEDICATION

This work is especially dedicated to my parents, Luis Zambrano and Juana Vega, and my brother and sister who believed and gave me all the necessary support to finish this work. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my couple Moisés Gálvez who encouraged me to continue ahead and was a very important piece in the completion of this work. All my relatives who somehow or other made very special contributions to the completion of the study.

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## CHAPTER I

### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Nowadays, to teach English as a second language is a hard task because students are not acculturated to the target language since they do not have the natural environment in which to acquire it. In the primary schools of Panama, something similar occurs, and the students face a big problem in learning a second language. Furthermore, they do not know how to read in their mother tongue, so it is even more difficult for them to read in a second language. Moreover, some of them read in a mechanical way without comprehending the message in context. In fact, even when they read in their native language, they have problems due to the lack of input they received in previous levels.

A crucial problem is a lack of comprehension of the reading materials in English. Many students in third grade, which is the population of interest for this research, have major deficiencies in English lexicon; this creates a serious problem for them because they do not understand what they read. Thus, many of the subjects taught in this bilingual school such as science, reading and mathematics,

require that they understand a text written in English; however, due to the complexity of these topics, the teacher sometimes translates them into the Spanish language. As a consequence, learners do not read in English because they begin to translate.

Moreover, the books used at this level are from England, so they are not appropriate according to the Panamanian requirements for academic achievement at this level according to the learner's age and maturity. Some students are Arabian or from other cultures and they are studying Spanish, French, and English. Therefore, Spanish is their second language; English becomes their third or foreign language. It is a really hard task for them to comprehend written English; because, they are receiving interference from the other two languages. Thus, they have poor knowledge of words, grammatical structure, and semantics; they are also slow to develop the ability to read and comprehend the context.

The students must study a large number of subjects such as science, grammar, reading, spelling, mathematics, and speaking in English. The demands of preparing to teach so many different subjects sometimes do not allow the teacher to prepare the visual aids

that can help learners with reading comprehension of the materials, especially in science. For instance, most s in the private school teach ten subjects in English; and, as a result, they do not have time to prepare visual aids or other materials that could help learners to extract the meaning from the context.

Finally, when the reading is so complex and difficult to understand, the student's comprehension slows down and the input they receive is reduced. The reading speed also decreases and comprehension of the materials becomes even harder for them; and this results in a barrier to their mental processes.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

According to Baugh and Cable (1987), the importance of the English language around the world is associated with the political role played by the countries where it is the official language. Indeed, English has an international influence in business enterprise and commerce; due to this situation, this language has become important in music, science, literature, and so forth.

The extent and importance of the English language today, makes it reasonable to assume that in the future, it will occupy an even greater role in many countries. Indeed, English is widely used as a second language throughout the world. It is even one of the official languages in many countries, as it is in Nigeria, India and so on.

English has become a language with a prominent place in international communication. It may be partly because of the tendency of English to go outside of its linguistic resources and borrow from other languages. Thus, its cosmopolitan vocabulary is an undoubted advantage that allows English to have an international use.

Panama is considered a "crossways" of the world because of the geographical position that it occupies in America. Thus, many people come to Panama with the idea of establishing a business or simply visiting the country. As a result, for those who speak English, it is a good occasion to communicate with those tourists or businessmen because English is also considered the commercial language of the world.



Even today in Panama, one uses English for many things: to read a magazine, a newspaper, clothing labels, flight schedules, travel guidebooks, and also to get a job. It could be said that the need to read the instructions of an electric appliance reinforces the need to learn English since, if a reader does not understand the instructions, the consequence may be damage to the appliance.

Another good reason for Panamanians to learn English is the fact that the Republic of Panama maintains good relations with most of the nations of the world. Since English is the political, diplomatic, and economic language worldwide, Panamanian diplomats need to be able to communicate in the English language in order to carry out their duties.

The last reason to be taken into consideration is the fact that mastering a second language, especially English, is a great benefit to any person, not only for personal satisfaction, but also because it can help professionally. One example of this is the establishment of an international financial center in Panama, which requires a large number of bilingual personnel to work in the banks of all the countries which have branches in Panama. Also sometimes professionals are

sent to other countries to enhance their professional knowledge. There are also many other employment and educational opportunities available to Panamanians; however, to obtain these benefits, knowledge of English is required.

It is important to develop the four linguistic skills in the schools because they provide students with opportunities to use the English language so that they master these abilities (speaking, listening, writing, and reading). Thus, at the different levels of elementary school, it is crucial to stress the importance of reading texts in English because of its influence on student's language skills, specifically in pronunciation; vocabulary, thought, judgments, attitudes, values, and so forth, as well as their performance in the other disciplines taught in English.

Finally, teaching English in elementary school, should emphasize especially the teaching of reading because reading is one of the most important elements in the acquisition of all human knowledge; this skill helps students in writing, and to develop the other language skills as well as providing valuable information not often available in other languages.

## **SIGNIFICANCE**

The effectiveness of the English language program is a matter of concern to administrative personnel, English teachers, and parents, who are involved in the educational process as well as to the learners themselves.

It is recognized that students confront a multitude of problems such as social, economic, family, and so forth, which impact directly on the language learning process. However, perhaps the greatest concern for teachers, students, and parents is the students' inability to communicate orally as well as in written form in the English language. As a result, in their eagerness to find a good methodology for English language instructions, teachers use methods that possibly develop other language skills, but not the ability to communicate. Teachers generally try to use all of the techniques available students give the best of their intellectual power. However, this is not usually enough; and as the ability to communicate fails to develop, students gradually lose enthusiasm for the subject.

Using reading to teach English will benefit not only the students, but also the teachers. Students can develop the skills necessary to communicate orally and in written form, and this is basically the purpose of teaching English in the Panamanian schools. It is accepted that some reading techniques can not only facilitate the learning of the English language, but also make it more interesting and meaningful for Panamanian students.

Consequently it is expected that the reading strategies presented in this research will help the teachers to teach a reading class, specifically in private schools where the reading contexts are sometimes too complex for the learners and require the use of visual aids, games, realia, and other aids in order to avoid translation and memorization of reading contexts without comprehension.

This research is directed to contribute to the development, not only of the ability to read but also of the other language skills, without which little will be noted in the academic performance of students. Teachers want their students to become interested in English and understand it; and this research will contribute in this respect because

it offers the students the opportunity to learn to read and to interchange information about contexts.

During reading instruction, students are aware of the importance of their role. They will participate actively and consciously in the activities related to informal readings. They will find it less threatening and more relevant. These activities lead students to increase and practice their vocabulary in reading materials that are of the student's interest. Most importantly, it stimulates students to express themselves by speaking and then by writing; that is to say, when students feel that they can read, their interest in writing appears spontaneously.

The objectives of this work were established as follow:

- 1) To provide concrete data about the results gathered during the implementation of the pre- and post- test that may facilitate the analysis of the research question and hypothesis on third grade students in the Oxford School.
- 2) To provide data about the students' reaction toward the innovative reading techniques applied during the first bimonthly period by means of a questionnaire.

- 3) To provide teachers based data about instructional techniques that may facilitate student's learning in third grade in The Oxford School.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

The teaching of English as a foreign language in Panama is difficult. Many years have passed since the school system introduced the teaching of English in primary and secondary school; however, the educational system has not been able to establish an effective language teaching program, which would elicit the best results in terms of language acquisition from the students. (Arenas, (1992)).

One important way in which English language instruction can be made more effective and enjoyable as well as interesting for the students is by using strategies or techniques that may improve the learner's ability to read in English in such a way that he/ she can understand the language and be more motivated to learn. Therefore, this research addresses the following research question and

hypothesis: Do innovative reading techniques help to improve the reading skill of English students of third grade elementary school than traditional reading techniques? And the hypothesis of this research was based on the assumption that “the use of innovative techniques could improve student’s reading abilities so that they can read better in the future”.

This research will involve the development of a procedure to improve reading comprehension in English. It deals with a treatment and evaluation of the results of the treatment.

The techniques suggested in this research might facilitate the work of the learner and improve one of the learner’s basic English language skills, which will have a major impact on their future learning.

### **DEFINITIONS OF KEY TERMS**

The following definitions of key terms have been provided to facilitate the understanding of the reader as to how they have been used within the context of this research. These definitions have been adopted from the following source: Webster’s II New Riverside Dictionary

**Reading:** (n) A written or printed matter. Any written material used in subject such as science, reading, grammar, math, and spelling.

**Reading problems:** A difficulty evident in some learners that does not allow them to comprehend a material. A student with a lack of lexicon, so that he /she cannot understand the meaning or message of written material; sentences in paragraphs and so forth.

**Techniques:** The systematic procedure by which a complex or scientific task is accomplished. A variety of tools or actions that facilitate the development of the reading skills in the English language; for example, the use of visuals aids.

**Third grade students:** Students who study at a primary school. A learner who passed a process of learning in second grade and he/ she goes admitted at third grade.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Many factors have influenced the great interest of the educational authorities of Panama in the English language instruction in the primary and secondary schools in recent decades. The first and most important reason to be taken into consideration is the fact that English is the international language of commerce, technology, science, and engineering. The geographical position of Panama and the fact that its centrality for tourism, commerce, and banking has made it necessary for Panamanians to know, and understand English.

Reading in English has become as important to the intellect as food is to the growth of a baby. One is like a machine, which needs to be fueled, or the information stored in it will be limited. Both, one's brain and a baby depend on what is given to nourish them. The first thing a teacher tries to teach his first grade student is to identify letters and numbers. This objective is based on the confirmation of the student in order to initiate the process of joining letters, reading, writing, and pronunciation. Reading is also important because, by

means of reading, the teaching- learning process in general takes place.

Reading is a complex development challenge that we know to be intertwined with many other developmental accomplishments: attention, memory, language, and motivation. For example, reading is not only a cognitive psycholinguistic activity but also a social activity. (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. ( 1996)).

Being a good reader in English means that a child has gained a functional knowledge of the principles of the English alphabetic writing system. Young children gain functional knowledge of the parts, products, and uses of the writing system getting the ability to attend to and analyze the external sound structure of spoken words. Understanding the basic alphabetic principles requires awareness that spoken language can be analyzed into strings of separable words, and words, in turn into sequences of syllables and phonemes within syllables.

Beyond knowledge about how the English writing system works, though, there is a point in a child's growth when it is expected "real

reading". To start, children are expected, without help, to read some unfamiliar texts, relying on the print and drawing a meaning from it (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. ( 1996)). This review of the literature will provide teachers with information about what reading is, advantages of reading in English, reading process, the reasons for some students' inability to read as well as useful techniques that can help students gain proficiency in the English language, especially in reading.

In reviewing the literature, many sources of information were checked, not only were texts related to reading comprehension and instructions reviewed, also other valuable resources such as books and research articles which led to the identification of more relevant teaching materials for Panamanian students of English.

#### **DEFINITION OF READING:**

Language has been defined as "the aspect of human behavior that involves the use of vocal sounds in meaningful patterns and, when they exist, corresponding written symbols, to form, express, and communicate thoughts and feelings" (American Heritage Dictionary (1969)). Oral language has two aspects, speaking and listening;

written language involves a writer and one or more readers. The active aspects are listening and reading. Reading is, therefore, one of the four main types of language activity. Its similarities to the three types, and its differences from them need to be understood by reading teachers.

Human beings were probably communicating through some form of spoken language several thousands years ago. Writing and reading were invented more or less 4,000 years after. Speech usually develops before the age of two; reading and writing are learned several years later. Thus, both, in the history of humankind and the development of each person, oral communication precedes written communication.

According to Goodman (1972: 151), "written and oral language is alternative surface structures with the same underlying deep structure. In both listening and reading, the language user infers this deep structure without resorting to a shift from oral to written surface structure or viceversa. It is only in the special case of oral reading that the reader is also interested in producing an oral signal and, even

then, it appears that proficient readers decode graphic language for meaning and then encode (recode) an oral signal.”

Gibson (1970), who considers reading to be the extraction of information from a text, presents the viewpoint of cognitive psychologists. Learning to communicate by spoken language is a prerequisite for reading. Once a child begins the progression from spoken to written language, the three phases of learning present three different kinds of learning tasks, and although they are roughly sequential, there is considerable overlapping, it means learning to differentiate graphic symbols from one another, learning letter-sound relationships, and using progressively higher-order units of structure.

The nature of reading varies not only with the skill of the reader but also with the reader's purposes and the characteristics of the text. Reading is a very complex activity that involves almost all-psychological functions: motivation, attention, emotion, cognition, and all kinds of memory. Since these psychological functions are far from perfectly understood, a true understanding of the reading process must await the further development of psychological and linguistic knowledge.

According to Hoages (1972), there are differences of opinion among linguists concerning what language is; how it is acquired, and how to describe it. Many linguists assume that reading comprehension is heavily dependent on the comprehension of spoken language, or suggest that the key is to get students to apply to reading, the processes they already use for understanding spoken language.

Goodman (1976) has emphasized that reading is a process in which the reader formulates hypothesis or guesses about meaning; and, as he reads ahead, the hypothesis are either confirmed or rejected and revised. It does not seem important to Goodman whether, in oral or silent reading, the reader produces the exact words of the writer as long as the reader responds correctly to the deep structure of meaning and produces an equivalent surface structure for that meaning.

While television, radio, and the movies all can serve some of the same purposes as reading, they offer recreational interests, satisfy curiosity, aid in understanding current events, supply information, and satisfy personal needs, reading has characteristics that other modes of

communication cannot match. Reading is uniquely individual and flexible.

Reading is the only form of mass communication in which a person can control the content and rate of presentation of the material. A reader can select reading material from a tremendous variety; and can read where, when, and how he pleases. The reader sets the pace, pausing, or taking careful notes, so reading is a preeminently private, personal, and self-controlled activity.

Moreover, to the television program, one needs bring only a receptive mind and sit torpidly while the display of sound and image fill the viewer. If others are watching, they are filled to the brim in precisely the same way all of them, and with precisely the same sound and images. The book, on the other hand, demands cooperation from the reader. It insists that you take part in the process. In doing so, it offers an inter-relationship that is made to order by the reader himself for the reader himself, one that most nearly fits his own peculiarities and idiosyncrasies. (Vega, (1990))

Reading is a very complex activity, and despite nearly a century of experimental study and theorizing, we are still far from understanding it. Differing viewpoints about the nature of reading have led to a wide variety of teaching programs. Reading provides a substitute for experience. Through reading, new words and ideas are learned; concepts are enlarged, refined, and clarified; information is digested and combined with what was known before, feelings of many kinds are intensified, weakened, or changed.

Reading is a way of learning, changing, and development. Reading can enrich and ennoble; it can also delude and debase. The act of reading is itself neutral, but the ideas and feelings aroused while reading become part of the person's total background of experience. They become integrated with the traces of all related previous experiences. Reading allows individuals to learn from the experience of others and permits human knowledge to become cumulative. (Arenas, (1992)).

Goodman (1976) considers reading to be a psycholinguistic guessing game; that involves the use of available minimal language cues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's



expectations. According to Goodman, the reader uses only as much information as necessary to get to the meaning; and that information is of three types: graphic, syntactic, and semantic.

First, the graphic information is gained visually; the reader supplies the other two. Using previously acquired knowledge of language structure, the reader makes predictions of the grammatical (syntactic) structure and supplies concepts that fit into structure. In turn, syntactic structure and meaning allow the reader to predict what the graphic input will be. (Goodman,(1976))

Reading is an active process in which the reader is trying to make sense of the written or printed message; reading is not a basically passive, receptive process. It is a grave error to define reading as the word function of language. The meanings the reader finds guide anticipations of the words to come.

### **ADVANTAGES OF USING READINGS:**

Reading is a tool of great value in the formation of the human being. For this reason, it is very crucial that the educational system takes this into consideration in curriculum design activities. When it

uses reading as a simple tool for acquiring knowledge, it diminishes the true value of this skill.

Reading contributes to the achievement of the major objectives of educational process. Reading is not a goal in itself. It is only an instrument whose value depends upon its use. In consequence, what purpose does reading serve when it is used to increase hatred, abhorrence, viciousness, and vulgarity in the human race? When reading is used as a formative tool, it separates humans from animals and the uncivilized. A good reading refreshes man and make him an optimist person ready to continue his daily struggle. (Vega, (1990)).

Reading is central to the learning process, and as Ghosn (1997) points out, carefully chosen children's literature allows children to develop their receptive language in entertaining meaningful contexts and naturally invites them to repeat many of the predictable words and phrases, which children gradually take ownership of and add to their receptive and productive language.

Teachers of all levels, in both primary and secondary schools should not forget that the basic requirement for effective reading is

comprehension. However it is necessary to recognize that developing reading skills is not an easy task. Teachers must be conscious at least of four aspects of reading: interpretation, influence on values, orientation, and memorization. Each of them requires attention on the part of the teacher.

Teaching reading in English is something different for students who up to now have been forced to repeat, memorize, write, and to do many other things which bored them, so that they did not achieve their teacher's goal –that the students speak the English language. Reading lessons are designed to offer beginner students early and instant success in English. (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. ( 1996))

There are many purposes, which should be taken into consideration when teaching reading in English. First, it improves student's pronunciation and allows them to become familiar with new words and to recognize others. Reading aloud is a good activity for exercising the student's vocal cords. Though at the beginning students may not understand what they are reading; teachers have to stimulate them to continue, because meaning is not the central focus.

Besides, teaching reading in English provides students with a variety of vocabulary items. Nowadays, teachers of English still force students to spend a great deal of time looking up words in the dictionary and translating texts from the target foreign language into their native language. This approach does not actually lead the students to understand and speak the foreign language that they are studying. (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. ( 1996) As a consequence, vocabulary is a language area that needs continued growth and development for both native and non-native speakers long after grammar and pronunciation are under reasonable control.

Moreover, teaching reading in English will develop students spelling. Through reading practice, students become familiar with word recognition and spelling. For the beginner of English, many particular features of English will need to be mastered. However, the teacher may be able to take advantage of the student's native language knowledge of the nature of spelling, particularly when the Spanish speaker, who can spell *accidente* and *rapido* in Spanish, would need only not to include the final vowel when spelling *accident* and *rapid* in English. (Baker, A.J & Piotrkowski C.S. ( 1996))

Most beginner learners of English do not need instruction in the complete range of the English spelling system. By practicing readings in English, they acquire little by little this skill. Students' spelling needs depend on their language and educational background.

Finally, reading in English would facilitate student's development in writing. It is said that among the four skills that are the goals of English instruction, writing is commonly last. Writing includes several sub-skills, one of which is spelling. It is important to know that in order to write well, it is necessary to spell well.

Teachers sometimes tend to confuse spelling with writing. Though these skills are intertwined, they are different. Teaching spelling is not the same as teaching composition. If teachers emphasize getting students to write too much; the spelling of individual words would be excessive, and this could inhibit students' fluency and expression of ideas. Once students acquire the ability to read, it is easier for them to develop other skills. (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. ( 1996))

## **IMPORTANCE OF READING:**

To appreciate the importance of reading, it is necessary to understand the complexity of the learning process. Thus, teachers should take into consideration that the act of reading includes the following skills:

- Recognition of visual symbols.
- Integration of symbols into words.
- Association of the words with their respective meanings.
- Comparison of the reading material with the proper ideas for accepting or rejecting the materials read.
- Application of the accepted material to daily actions.

Teachers of both, primary and secondary levels, should not forget a reality; students who do not have a solid foundation in reading fail with frequency. Therefore, academic programs at the secondary levels are developed essentially on a reading foundation. Finally, good readings maintain student's interest, and permit them reflection over past learning as well as providing projection into future learning when they have acquired enough maturity to read and comprehend what they have read. (Arenas, 1992)

Teachers will increase their efforts when they are conscious of the importance of reading and when they can teach using reading objectives that they understand and can make their students comprehend. Goodman (1974), explored the psycholinguistic aspects of reading and learning to read and he states that reading is a process of getting from print by bringing meaning to it.

On the other hand, reading achievement is as much affected by creativity as by intelligence. (Berg & Rentel (1967)). They also claim that creative reading is fostered by stimulating anticipation and expectation and producing something constructive after the reading. Encouragement of divergent thinking (new ideas) or convergent thinking (using the author's own ideas) aids creativity.

Furthermore, the appropriate manner of reading to enjoy a common fiction work differs from the techniques of learning that are necessary for careful study, such as the instructions as to how to drive a car or to understand a mathematical principle. Both differ completely from the most effective method to "lead" through a book or to correct a test.

Each subject requires certain special approaches to reading. So, reading instruction has to be related to all the other school activities or has to be part of these activities. It is necessary that reading is taught in such a way that it contributes to effective learning in all facets of the curriculum. The ultimate goal of reading instruction is to develop individuals who comprehend what they read. Words occur in smaller groups (phrases, clauses) and larger groups (sentences), which in turn are organized into paragraphs and series of paragraphs.

In contrast, certain subskills must be acquired in order to extract information from printed material. First, the learner must be able to recognize and decode individual words. Once word recognition and decoding skills have been learned, the student must be able to obtain the meanings of these printed words rapidly, relying on memory or inferring from context. The learner must be able to detect the syntactic relations between words, and to relate the resulting information to previous knowledge.

A number of writers of differing backgrounds have arrived at the common conclusion that reading is essentially the translation or



decoding of graphic symbols into their speech equivalents. These writers agree that the task of the beginner reader is to translate or decode printed words into their corresponding spoken words. Comprehension is considered irrelevant for the beginner reader, who can therefore be started with single words or with word parts. Such writers tend to agree on beginning instruction with word elements and words, paying little attention to meaning until substantial progress in decoding has been achieved.

English language students are not just concerned with speaking; they want to be able to read and write English as well as speak it. Even in audiolingual programs, which stress listening, and speaking, the student needs to know how to read. In fact, in most programs, it is assumed that the student can read. Obviously, this is not true in elementary and secondary school English language classes; and English teachers working in community adult schools know that more and more of their students are illiterate in their first language. For many university foreign students, reading skills are perhaps even more important for academic success than speaking ability. (Arenas, (1992))

## **READING SKILLS:**

Talking about communicative competence has hidden attention to the skills required for reading well in a new language. Perhaps as a reaction to its apparent association with the "old-fashioned" grammar translation method, language teachers have turned away from the reading skills. However, today, especially in language programs designed to meet specific needs, many teachers realize that the skill student's need most is reading. (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. (1996))

Most authorities today concede that there are different skills involved in reading, but they are so interdependent that there is no particular sequence in which they should be taught. The learning of different reading skills will often occur almost simultaneously. Children will generally learn related techniques naturally without unnecessary structuring by the teacher just as they learned by themselves, the very complex processes involved in learning to speak. They need primarily reasons to want to read, and with good reading materials; then they will learn. There is a danger in too much isolation of skills and consequent drills and scientific analysis in which students have little interest.

Gerrard and McInnes (1967) identify three broad groups of reading skills: recognizing and understanding words, recognizing and understanding ideas and oral reading skills. In keeping with the basic principle that most people learn to read by reading what interests them and what they enjoy recognizing and understanding ideas was further sub-divided into three definable sub-groups:

**General Comprehension Skills:** Finding main ideas, noting details, recognizing sequence, predicting outcomes, evaluating the quality and style of writing and making inferences.

**Critical Reading Skills:** Distinguishing fact and opinion, classifying ideas, generalizing, comparing and contrasting, seeing cause and effect relationships, drawing conclusions, weighing validity or facts particularly in a controversy, perceiving the real problem, identification and evaluation of character traits, interpreting figurative and idiomatic language, and reacting to the mood or tone of a selection.

**Study Skills:** Selecting and evaluating, organizing, outlining, summarizing; remembering, following directions and reporting.

Whereas the general comprehension skills deal largely with understanding the message of the writer, the critical reading skills go a step further. They require, to a greater extent, careful evaluation of the message and the making of judgment about it. Cheyney (1971) identifies a number of "critical reading skills" which he says make fuller use of analytical thinking processes than do the general comprehension skills. He defines "critical" as a process characterized by careful and exact evaluation and judgment or to judge a matter severely.

Imagine what life would be like if you could not read. Definitely, you could obtain news and also be entertained by watching television, but you could not read many things each day- street signs, mail, food and medicine labels, advertisements, forms, questionnaires, and newspapers. The reading skill is necessary because such everyday reading tends to be of high school level.

According to Arenas (1992), the attainment of reading competence is a major educational objective that must be achieved for the result of the academic program to be satisfactory. Until one is able to use such learning tools as textbooks, reference works, and library

material, one's educational opportunities are very limited. Despite advances in the use of audiovisual procedures, reading remains the main avenue for acquiring information.

Furthermore, she also considers that a child, whose reading skills are inadequate, is handicapped in all curricular areas. Of course, children must learn to read before they can read to learn. Reading is both, a major part of the elementary school curriculum and an essential tool for mastering subject matter. Moreover, with the increasing emphasis on adult education and with continuing rapid changes in science, technology, and the kinds of jobs available, reading plays a leading role in continuing education and self-improvement.

According to Harker (1975), if reading comprehension involves a variety of skills; it is easy to conclude that practice should be given for each type of skill. If it is reasoning while reading, one might conclude that what is needed is training in reasoning. There is no consensus as to how to improve a student's ability to reason, or to what extent it is possible to do so. Such training needs content to reason about and in

the absence of information to the contrary, that content might as well be reading content.

Reasoning about a science experiment may involve different cognitive skills from understanding the sequence of events leading up to a way. The use of a variety of reading materials and types of questions provide a broad base for transfer or application of reasoning in many different kinds of reading situations. The ability to think, reason, and solve problems has a strong relationship to the ability to understand while reading. Nevertheless, a number of other factors also influence the ability to comprehend.

For this reason, according to Dubin (1982), reading is a multifaceted, complex skill consisting of a number of psychological, physical, and social elements. Just as there are many facets to mastering a language, so there are many facets to effective, mature reading.

By all measures, reading would seem to be the most attainable language skill for students in countries where English is not widely spoken. While it is almost impossible to achieve fluency in speaking

without the opportunity to practice frequently with native speakers, reading requires only a text and a reader and possibly a dictionary.

The fact that reading competence in a new language is an achievable goal should encourage teachers to turn their attention to developing reading programs that will help students move from controlled, contrived textbook prose into reading materials that they select for themselves, according to their own interests and curiosity about the world. With the better understanding of the nature of the reading process, of mature reading strategies, and about what a reading skill program should include, language teachers will be able to choose materials and activities that capitalize on their student's interests (Vega, (1990))

#### **READING PROCESS:**

Differentiation of written characters is logically preliminary to developing grapheme-phoneme relationships. Such differentiations are made on the basis of distinctive features, which are usually pairs of opposites such as tall versus short lines, straight versus curved lines, diagonal versus perpendicular lines, and so on. When the letters can be distinguished from one another, the decoding process can begin.

The use of basic symbols to represent meaning is a relatively recent invention in man's history. If the development of the human species were plotted on a time-line representing a single year, one would find that mechanical printing began only a few minutes ago. However, in technological societies today, a person without basic reading skills is severely handicapped. Literacy is widely regarded as an essential tool for learning.

According to Dubin (1982), psychological descriptions of the reading process emphasize the need for active participation. This is in direct contrast to the familiar old notion of reading as a receptive skill. The following are three quotations from scholars concerned with reading in a second language, all of which stress that interaction must take place between the writer of the text and the reader:

“Reading is a long- distance discussion between a reader and an author. There is an essential interaction between language and thought in reading. The writer encodes thought as language, and the reader decodes language to thought.” (Goodman, 1968).



“Reading is not a reaction to a text, but an interaction between writer and reader mediated through the text... reading efficiency is a matter of how effective a discourse the reader can create from the text, in terms of his purposes in engaging in the discourse in the first place”. (Widdowson, 1979).

“Reading is ... an active process, in which the reader must make an active contribution by drawing upon and using concurrently various abilities he has acquired. ” (Wardhaugh, 1969).

According to Asimov (1974), when you read a book, you create your own images, you create the sound of various voices, and you create gestures, expressions, emotions, and so forth. You create everything but the bare words themselves; and, if you take the slightest pleasure in creation, the book has given you something the television programs cannot.

According to Tullius (1971), one reason students take longer to read a passage in English is that they make more eye fixations per line and they frequently regress to check back on information when they do not understand what they read.

In fact, the second language learner is not able to predict at all in the beginning stage of reading with much accuracy. As he becomes more proficient in word recognition, he seems to use semantic cues to make his guesses. He seems much more skilled at making guesses using the semantic system. For many students, the syntactic system seems to be "noise" that gets in their way. Schlesinger (1968) found this to be true even for native speakers of English. That is, in reading very complex syntactic structures, one uses a lexical strategy to understand what one reads rather than a syntactic one.

Man possesses rich and varied possibilities of communication since he counts on means of great productivity and he could use of this communication to enrich his experience. One of the different resources man has to communicate is oral message through reading. Man is considered here as a social and rational human being with a system of communication with his fellowmen. This allows him to express his thoughts and feelings. For this reason, reading is like a vehicle that allows one to acquire knowledge, which belongs to someone else. Reading helps to bring one up to date in a mental and social way.

In order for communication to be effective, the symbol must be perceived as something with content. It is the same as saying that writing is the material aspect of communication, but it is carried out only when the reader takes part in the meanings which he knows are symbolized by the signs. Reading activities are those that are accomplished in order to increase one's abilities in the oral and written language. When man knows how to make use of the written language, he acquires a new method to incorporate into his experience along with other experiences.

On the other hand, Bialystok and Ryan (1985) point out that the successful reader must have skills in analyzing language in order to understand how the alphabetic code represents meaningful messages. As a result, they state that two crucial factors in successful early reading are knowledge available for analysis and access to meaning.

Typical English-speaking children have considerable knowledge available for analysis at the time they enter school--several thousand words in their vocabularies, some exposure to rhymes and alliterations, practice writing their own names and "reading" environmental print, and other sources of information about the nature

of the analysis they will be expected to engage in. In contrast, non-English speakers are confronted with the task of analyzing knowledge they have not yet acquired.

In addition, English speakers making initial attempts at reading, understand, if they are successful, the products of their efforts. They read words they know and sentences they understand. They can use context and probabilities effectively, and they can self-correct efficiently. However, non-English speakers have much less basis for knowing whether their reading is correct because the crucial meaning-making process is short circuited by lack of language knowledge. For this reason, giving a child initial reading instruction in a language that he or she does not yet speak can undermine the child's chance to see literacy as a powerful form of communication, by knocking the support of meaning out from underneath the process of learning.

### **Preschool Importance in Reading**

The number of months that children spend in preschool has been found to be related to achievement test scores in second grade, behavior problems in third grade, and school retention in kindergarten through third grade (Pianta and McCoy, 1997). Therefore many

authors have gotten the conclusion that children with more preschool experience had higher achievement scores and fewer behavior problems and were less likely to be required to repeat a grade.

The National Center for Education Statistics (1995) found that preschool experience was associated with children's literacy and numeracy skills. Due to the fact that literacy skills are associated with class, culture, and linguistic background, it is heartening that preschool has been shown to benefit children's performance in domains that relate to school success (Haskins, 1989; Lee et al., 1988; McKey et al., 1985).

## **Second and Third Grades**

### **Fostering Independent and Productive Reading**

In first grade, the challenge for children is to learn how to read. In fourth grade and up, it is taken for granted that they are capable--independently and productively--of reading to learn. Consequently, written language becomes both the primary and the fallback medium through which students are expected to acquire and demonstrate their understanding of school knowledge.

One of the goals of the educational system is that by the time students enter fourth grade, it is imperative that their ability to read be sufficiently well developed that it does not impede their capacity to comprehend. Thus, students' ability to comprehend, analyze, criticize, abstract, and reflect on text, must be adequate to profit from the learning opportunities ahead.

For this reason, teachers at the second and third grades consider that these grades are critical school years for ensuring that all students can make this transition, by building their capacity to comprehend more difficult and more varied texts. At the same time, the curriculum must be designed with due recognition that students' higher-order comprehension can be limited not only by the presence or absence but also by the automaticity of lower-level skills. (Baker, A. J & Piotrkowski C. S. ( 1996))

Teachers have a great task to help students to acquire higher-order comprehension processes in such a way that students can get and require analytic, evaluative, and reflective access to local and long-term memory. Although their active attention is limited, readers

must struggle with recognizing the words of a text, and they lose track of meaning (Daneman and Tardiff, 1987; Perfetti, 1985).

### **Reading Fluency**

By the end of the third grades, students should possess the skills habits and learning strategies needed for four grade success. However, it could not be achieved if learners at the beginning of second grade are too laborious and unsure to admit independent reading or understanding of any but the simplest of texts. This means not only that students should be reading on grade level but also that they should be demonstrably prepared to discuss, learn about, and write about the ideas and information encountered in their texts.

Therefore, at least in early acquisition, reading ability is a bit like foreign language ability: use it or lose it, and the more tenuous the knowledge, the greater the loss. Thus, the well-documented and substantial losses in reading ability that are associated with summer vacation are especially marked for younger and poorer readers (Hayes and Grether, 1983; Alexander and Entwisle, 1996).

According to Burns, S.; Griffin P. & Snow. C (1994) on the first day of school, second-grade teachers are faced with two sets of students. A few are reading independently at relatively advanced levels; typically these are students who read well enough at the end of first grade to read on their own during the summer. Many other students seem not to know how to read at all. Most of the latter have simply forgotten what they learned in the first grade, but some failed to learn to read adequately in the first place.

As quickly as possible, the second-grade teacher's job is to figure out which group is which and to ensure that all students gain or regain the first-grade accomplishments and move on.

Unfortunately, the author says that second-grade basal reading programs generally provide little help toward this end, as they start where they left off at the end of grade one. Given well-structured review, children who have simply forgotten will generally recover quickly. In contrast, for children who fell or sneaked through the cracks in first grade, identification and assistance are urgent.



## Spelling

A major task for the second-grade teacher, then, is to ensure that all students understand the nature and utility of the alphabetic principle. To develop the children's phonemic awareness and knowledge of basic letter-sound correspondences, spelling instruction is important. Beginning with short, regular words, such as pot, pat, and pan, the focus of these instructional activities is gradually extended to more complex spelling patterns and words, including long vowel spellings, inflections, and so on.

In later grades, such instruction should extend to spellings *and* meanings of prefixes, suffixes, and word roots: leading children to notice such patterns across many different examples, supports learning the target words and helps children transfer spelling patterns and word analysis strategies beyond the lesson, into their own reading and writing (Calfee and Henry, 1986; Henry, 1989). Several guides for spelling instruction, based on research on spelling development (Templeton and Bear, 1992; Treiman, 1993) are available, although no evaluative data on their effectiveness in ordinary classrooms exists.

Two options are presented when readers can not recognize a word or a spelling pattern. For example, they can use context or pictures to guess or finesse its identity, or they can sound it out. Laboratory research with good and poor readers at second grade and beyond has repeatedly demonstrated that, whereas good readers become as fast and accurate at recognizing words without context as with, poor readers as a group remain differentially dependent on context. An overreliance on context is symptomatic that orthographic processing is proceeding neither quickly nor completely enough to do its job.

According to Harris & Sipay (1975) one of the most important questions for second- and third-grade teachers is therefore how best to help children reach this level. Given that the goal is to help children learn to read the words and understand them too, a promising tactic would seem to be to engage them in more connected reading of appropriate text.

It has long been appreciated that a critical factor in considering the learning impact of time spent reading is the difficulty of the text relative

to the student's ability. Harris & Sipay indicate common terms to describe differences among texts. For instance:

- The *independent* reading level is the highest level at which a child can read easily and fluently: without assistance, with few errors in word recognition, and with good comprehension and recall.
  
- The *instructional* level is the highest level at which the child can do satisfactory reading provided that he or she receives preparation and supervision from a teacher: errors in word recognition are not frequent, and comprehension and recall are satisfactory. This level helps teachers to recognize their student's reading difficulties and look for solutions to overcome this problem.
  
- The *frustration* level is the level at which the child's reading skills break down: fluency disappears, errors in word recognition are numerous, comprehension is faulty, recall is vague, and signs of emotional tension and discomfort become evident. For this reason, it is necessary teachers' patience

and supervision so that factors such as stress and anxiety may not impede that students' reading achievement could be affected.

### **Comprehension Development**

For purposes of discussion, the development of productive reading comprehension can be considered in terms of three factors:

- (1) concept and vocabulary development,
- (2) command of the linguistic structures of the text, and
- (3) metacognitive or reflective control of comprehension.

Learning new concepts and the words that encode them is essential for comprehension development. People's ability to infer or retain new words in general is strongly dependent on their background knowledge of other words and concepts. Even at the youngest ages, the ability to understand and remember the meanings of new words depend quite strongly on how well developed one's vocabulary already is (Robbins and Ehri, 1994).

Vocabulary instruction also appears to produce increases in children's reading comprehension. Likewise, looking across studies,

Stahl and Fairbanks (1986) noted differences in the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction as well. Methods providing repeated drill and practice on word definitions resulted in significant improvement with the particular words that had been taught but no reliable effect on reading comprehension scores. In contrast, methods in which children were given both information about the words' definitions and examples of the words' usages in a variety of contexts resulted in the largest gains in both vocabulary and reading comprehension.

An important source in reading comprehension is also of word knowledge. If a student is exposed to some books, s/he will be in contact with rare structure. As a consequence, educational approaches that encourage children to read more, both, in school and out, should increase their word knowledge (Nagy and Anderson, 1984) and reading comprehension (Anderson et al., 1988).

The relation between print exposure and comprehension need not be limited to the child's own reading in school. Cain (1996) studied the home literacy activities of 7- and 8-year-old whose word reading accuracy was appropriate for their chronological age but who differed in their comprehension ability. She reports the following contrasts:

"The children who were skilled comprehenders reported reading books at home more frequently than the less skilled children, and their parents reported that they were more likely to read story books.

According to Snow, Burns & Griffin (1994) a program designed to enhance background knowledge and conceptual sophistication among third graders is Concept Oriented Reading Instruction (CORI). The emphasis of the program is on the comprehension of interesting texts. The program is designed around broad interdisciplinary themes, exploiting real-world experiences, a range of cognitive strategies, and social groupings to promote self-direction.

This program was designed for third graders in high-poverty schools with a history of low achievement, it has been successfully used at both, the classroom and the whole-school level. The third-grade students who got in touch with this program had ranged in reading levels from first to fourth grade, and students with limited English proficiency were mainstreamed and included in the classroom. The program had effectively increased narrative text comprehension, expository text comprehension, and other language art skills on standardized tests, as well as increasing students' performance on the

Maryland School Performance Assessment Program (MSPAP)  
(Guthrie et al., 1996).

On the other hand, reciprocal teaching is a particularly interesting approach to consider in detail because of its apparent effectiveness and because it illustrates the mixed instructional agenda and pedagogical strategies. Reciprocal teaching provides guided practice in the use of four strategies (predicting, question generating, summarizing, and clarifying) that are designed to enhance children's ability to construct the meaning of text (Palincsar et al., 1993).

Snow, Burns & Griffin (1994) state some viewpoints of reciprocal teaching that may help learners to grasp the meaning of some texts. They include:

1. Meaningful use of comprehension-monitoring and comprehension-fostering strategies.
2. Discussion for the purpose of building the meaning of text
3. The use of text that offers appropriate challenges to the children (i.e., there is content worth discussing in the text

and the text is sufficiently accessible to the children); and, finally,

4. The use of text that is thematically related so that children have the opportunity to build their knowledge of a topic or area over time.

Research on reciprocal teaching with young children in first and second grades indicates statistically significant improvement in listening comprehension (which assessed ability to recall information, summarize information, draw inferences from text, and use information to solve a novel problem), and fewer referrals to special education or remedial reading programs.

#### **FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE IN READING:**

Linguists have not as yet demonstrated how one can get the students to improve their ability to discover deep structure. Seifort (1976) indicates that good comprehension requires fairly automatic word recognition. The more attention is required in a struggle to figure out the words, the less attention can be paid to the search for meaning. Many poor comprehenders are concerned with recognizing



or decoding each word and fail to use the relationships between words that could speed up the recognition process.

People's experiential backgrounds affect comprehension in that the concepts formed through past experiences influence their interpretation by allowing the reader to bring meaning to the printed page. The more similar the author's and reader's experiential background, the more complete the communication can be. A lack of experience can seriously hamper comprehension. For example, a rural student who has never seen a traffic light probably will have difficulty understanding a story about how someone used such a device to cross the street safely. At times, restricted concepts also interfere with comprehension.

According to Vaughn (1975), interest is a potent factor in comprehension, especially for poor readers. Davey (1976) and Blanton and Bullock (1973) agree that still another factor consists of selecting the right elements of the situation, putting them together in the right relations, and also with the right amount of weight or influence or force for each.

“The mind is assailed, as it were, by every word in the paragraph. It must select, repress, soften, emphasize, correlate, and organize, all under the influence of the right mental set or purpose or demand.” (Thorndike (1971)). What one may infer from this is that purposeful reading entails the selection and interpretation of facts significant in terms of the reader's aims.

One of the most difficult tasks of a language teacher, both in first (L1) and second (L2) language contexts, is to foster a positive attitude toward reading. Unfortunately, due to time limits and other constraints, teachers are often unable to actively encourage children to seek entertainment and information in reading materials due to the fact that most of the reading texts are boring, and too complex for the student's cognitive and interest level. (Latha, (1999)).

### **Phonemic Awareness:**

According to Snow, Burns & Griffin (1994) phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken words and syllables are themselves made up of sequence of elementary speech sound. This understanding is essential of learning to read an alphabetic language because these are the elementary sounds or phonemes that letters

represent. Without phonemic awareness, phonics can make no sense, and the spelling of word can be learned only by route.

The lack of phonemic awareness is the most powerful determinant of the likelihood of failure to learn to read because of its importance in learning the English alphabetic system or in learning how print represents spoken words. If children cannot hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, they have an extremely difficult time learning how to map those sounds to letters and letter patterns. In order to avoid this deficiency, Snow, Burns & Griffin (1994), recommend, the use of a program called. "The Reading Task Force" which establishes a balance and comprehensive approach to reading.

## **SOLUTIONS TO IMPROVE READINGS**

**The Reading Task Force** states that reading problems can be avoided following these instructions:

- A strong literature, language, and comprehension program that includes a balance of oral and written language;

- An organized, explicit skills program that includes phonemic awareness (sounds in words), phonics, and decoding skills to address the needs of the emergent reader;
  
- On going diagnosis that informs teaching and assessment that insures accountability; and
  
- A powerful early intervention program that provides individual tutoring for children at a risk of reading failure.

If this program is followed, children in elementary school can overcome reading problems and at the end of third grade; Snow, Burns & Griffin (1994) state that learners will be able to:

- Read independently grade –level fiction and nonfiction materials with literal and inferential comprehension.
  
- Develop knowledge of common spelling patterns, roots, and affixes;

- Use conventional spelling and conventions of print (paragraphs, end-sentence punctuation);
- Question; clarify new words; make predictions and answer “if-then” questions; summarize reading passages; and answer questions that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of grade-level fiction and nonfiction material; and
- Support answers to question about the reading by drawing on background knowledge and upon literal inferential information from the text.

### **Learning Activities**

At the third-grade level, Snow, Burns & Griffin point out that students should continue to be immersed in a print-rich environment. Children should read independently every day in school and at home. Students have daily writing opportunities. Direct, explicit phonics instruction and formal spelling instruction are provided. Activities are also structured to promote reading comprehension. Examples of learning activities for this age group include:

- Reading aloud to a partner with rhythm, pace, and intonation that sounds like natural speech;

- Maintaining a reading log of books, read independently, showing reading of increasingly complex texts;
- Writing a report based upon reading about a topic in several sources that includes appropriate facts and uses conventional spelling and conventions of print (paragraphs, end-sentence punctuation);
- Engaging in word studies and maintaining word logs for spelling and vocabulary development.
- Doing process writing for different purposes and audiences that develops higher-order thinking; and
- Participating in guided and independent discussions that promote effective comprehension strategies and higher – order thinking.

Reading is a skill that everyone needs whether s/he is a student in elementary, secondary, university, or adult education school. However, it is a skill that is slighted in most English teacher-training programs. Reading instruction means different things to different teachers. For learners, it may also mean problems which are

specifically their own. Teachers will increase their efforts when they are conscious of the importance of reading and when they can teach using reading objectives that they understand and can make their students comprehend.

### **Objectives of a Reading Program**

According to Sánchez (1972), the following should be the primary objectives of a reading program.

#### **Objective No. 1:**

To comprehend the material read. Nothing is as important in reading as comprehending the content of what is read. It is a fact that comprehension is a complex process, which involves at least four components. These include interpretation and memorization. The kind of reading that most helps to develop comprehension is silent reading. Thus, silent reading must be given careful attention beginning with the lowest levels of language learning.

In other words, teachers must measure student's comprehension of all the material read even if this material is read for recreation or general information. Measurement can be conducted by

means of a variety of procedures. The objective is to avoid monotony and to maintain the student's interest in the material read. For this reason, Sanchez (1972) recommended the following measurement procedures

- Oral questions for the students:
- Oral questions for the teacher.
- Written questions before and after the reading.
- True or false tests.
- Multiple-choice tests.
- Fill in the blank tests.
- Expressing through graphics the most important aspects of the material read.

Objective No. 2:

To increase reading speed. Reading speed and comprehension proceed simultaneously. Neither should be sacrificed for the other. The idea is that the reader maintains satisfactory speed as well as a high level of comprehension. A rapid reader who does not comprehend or understand the reading material obviously is a bad reader.



Reading speed has a close relationship to the kind of reading undertaken. Certain kinds of reading help develop speed and comprehension. However, oral reading plays an important role at the lower levels of language learning. Thus, teachers need to listen to students' reading in order to identify their reading deficiencies. At higher levels, reading time must be divided into equal parts for silent and oral reading.

Objective No. 3:

To enrich the reading vocabulary from that of oral expression, or of written expression, in order that when one encounters unfamiliar words while reading, he can establish the meaning from the context. The relationship of these words with other words whose meanings are familiar will allow the reader to deduce the meaning.

The written expression vocabulary is usually the most limited. In effect, words that are understood in reading and are used in speaking are often omitted in writing for fear of mistakes. This means that word recognition exercises must be frequent and well graduated.

#### Objective No. 4:

To form good habits and develop reading skills. The formation of good reading habits is very important and must have teacher's attention at all academic levels. Among the more important good reading habits are the following: (Sánchez ,(1974))

- Correct posture to read;
- Adequate voice tone and level;
- Reading without useless movements;
- Correct pronunciation;
- Special attention to the punctuation; and
- Correct treatment of all reading materials.

One must observe not only habits but also the development of specific reading abilities. Among these are:

- Recognition of words in context;
- Recognition of main ideas;
- Ability to summarize the material read;
- Differentiation between the real and the imaginative; and
- Skills in using the index and dictionary.

Objective No. 5:

Use reading as a means of study, recreation, and general information. At all academic levels, daily-reading exercises must be utilized. All students should have at least one silent reading exercise daily. If time allows, students should have an oral reading as well. By using reading as a means of study, it is possible to advance in the various academic subjects and, at the same time, achieve the different objectives of the reading program.

A well-selected recreational reading program incorporated into school activities or at home constitutes an excellent resource for the rational use of free time. The school library and the classroom library should have a good selection of texts that include both, readings for pleasure, and readings for information. (Arenas, 1992))

Objective No. 6:

To effectively use the school library. The school library is the most effective resource to achieve general and specific objectives. If the library is well equipped and organized in such a way that it functions in conjunction with other learning resources and activities

that are carried out in the school, it will be possible to achieve the following objectives:

➤ A progressive development of the habits, skills, and attitudes of good readers, capable of using reading as an instrument of study, recreation, and general information.

➤ To interest teachers and students in using a variety of distinct types of readings: intensive, extensive, related sequences, etc. and to create consciousness that reading is a basic tool for developing the intelligence, the formation of the character and the reinforcement of the personality.

➤ To utilize the library as a vehicle of cultural acquisition, capable of projecting the school effort into the community and attracting the community to the school.

## STRATEGIES TO TEACH READING

Once the instructor has made a decision as to which items of the reading lesson he will teach, he has to select an appropriate technique. Whether engaged in teaching adolescents or children, it seems logical that different techniques are needed for teaching different item types; example: idioms, sets of related words, abstract words, etc. The techniques used depend to a large extent on the objectives the teacher has for teaching the vocabulary.

The understanding of a reading can be achieved if the teachers use games. Games are by definition fun, and nearly everyone would agree that if learning can be made enjoyable, students will learn more. What is perhaps not always realized is that adolescents and also adults enjoy games as much as children and, if the purpose of a game is explained to them, do not feel that it is children or out of place to participate in a game in the classroom (<http://iteslj.org/technique/Deesri-Games.html>).

Teachers can find the way to make their students understand a reading lesson. Dramatization is a good option which students enjoy;

visual aids are useful too. There are many ways to facilitate students' understanding of a reading lesson.

Reading is the most important element in the acquisition of all human knowledge. Ruddell (1974) points out some strategies that can be used to improve reading:

More than any other strategy, **extensive reading** is the key to building an adequate vocabulary. Thus far, using a dictionary and familiarizing a student with word formation have been discussed. However, both of these should be considered merely as tools, which will enable students to increase their vocabulary and thus make reading less of a chore and more of an enjoyable activity.

A recommended procedure is for students to underline those words, which they do not know, looking up a word only if it is absolutely necessary. After they have finished reading, they can go back and make a list of the new words when they find that a word has reappeared and that the meaning has become clear. Students should develop a system for recording the meaning of words, which they do look up. This could be done either using index cards or a notebook.

Regardless of the method chosen, students should record the word, its derivatives, the pronunciation, the definition, and a model sentence. Students should review their records periodically and place a check mark next to those words they forget. When they feel confident that they know a word, they can then remove the card or cross the word off the list. Being systematic about new words encountered will help students enlarge their vocabulary.

***Intensive Reading:***

Ruddell defines intensive reading as that kind of reading in which the students are responsible for covering all the material in the given text. This means understanding the given materials and being able to reproduce it orally or in writing if necessary. This is the kind of reading required for studying various content areas in the language; e.g. science, mathematics, etc.

The reader must be able to recognize transitional signals such as first, then, next, after, finally, etc. connectives identifying relationships between sentences or larger than sentence discourse elements such as furthermore, therefore, nevertheless, unless, etc. time relationships reflected by verb tenses such as is going to have,

had, should have had, etc.; and other rhetorical devices. Before each intensive reading task, students may be given special vocabulary preparation and questions to help focus on the reading. Following the reading task, they may be asked comprehension and discussion questions to test their understandings and to reinforce the reading. This is the conventional, most widely used approach to reading skill development practices.

***Skimming:***

This particular skill is one that intermediate to advanced level students should begin to develop. Ruddell defines this as a *“procedure for overviewing or previewing materials to determine whether the information is pertinent to the need at hand.”* The reader, in other words, skims or moves lightly over the surface of the text, looking for the outlines, main headings, subheadings, first and last lines of paragraphs, and so on, enough to get a general idea of the context. The reader does this to determine, as Ruddell says, whether or not the whole text is important to the reader’s purposes or appropriate enough to read intensively and thoroughly.



### ***Scanning:***

According to Ruddell, scanning is sometimes used as a synonym for skimming. The word scan here represents the specialized of looking for specific pieces of information in a written text; for example, looking for words in a dictionary or a telephone number in a directory. In scanning, the reader has in mind specific questions to answer or data such as a data, word, a name, a number, etc.

For this kind of reading, the reader's eyes scan sweep over the material much as they do in skimming, but the purpose is different, in scanning, the reader is looking for specific answers to questions or for certain pieces of information. Students planning to study in universities need to develop this kind of reading skill in order to conduct research, to look up references, or to go quickly through large numbers of library books in a short period of time. Scanning like skimming requires training the eyes to move rapidly over the printed page, many times faster than in slow, careful intensive reading.

It is important then to keep in mind these kinds of reading and the purposes for which they are used. Unless students are aware of these distinctions, they may continue to approach every reading task

as if it were an intensive reading assignment, lose valuable time and energy, and always remain slow readers. Further, unless the teacher is clear about the purpose of the reading assignment, the preparation and follow-up exercise may be more mechanical than meaningful.

If, for instance, the teacher wants to encourage general reading fluency, he or she will not burden the students with great numbers of highly specific questions on minute details in the reading. This might be appropriate for intensive reading in science, but not for general comprehension of a short story, where questions of a general nature, overall concepts, main points, and key features are most important.

Significant research has been directed toward identifying the strategies of techniques used by people to read well. According to Dublin, (1984) such strategies, which are numerous, seem to group themselves around the following core ideas:

***Adjusting attention according to the material:***

Not all-reading matter is the same. Different types of materials require different reading modes. Some selections should be read quickly without bothering about details; others require careful, deliberate attention. Good readers continually shift and adjust their

attention according to the nature of the reading as well as their objectives in reading it.

***Using the total contexts as an aid to comprehension:***

The meaning of selected material lies not only in those pages, which it appears, but also in the total context of the book, or periodical. Good readers use all of the matter including the table of content, as well as the chapter and section headings, as quick aid to comprehension.

***Search reading:***

A more attentive approach than skimming, search reading is usually appropriate for expository prose. The reader makes use of key words or groups of synonymous words and expressions, which the author has utilized to avoid the fault of repeating the same word too often. The reader looks repeated elements of all kinds that present new ideas or themes.

***Predicting, guessing, and anticipating:***

These three words describe what good readers do as their eyes quickly go down a page of print picking up meaning in bunch, so to

speak. On the word level, the reader guesses the meaning of unfamiliar words by using the context. On the syntactic level, they use what they know about the forms of the language to extract meaning without actually reading all the words.

The idea of a dialog between author and reader is a part of the process of predicting and anticipating. The reader tends to anticipate the author's words before he encounters them on the page.

***Critical reading:***

A more sophisticated form of predicting is reading critically, or reading "between the lines" by looking for the meaning behind the author's words. This involves strategies such as looking for inferences, implication, tone of voice, etc.

***Receptive reading:***

Careful reading is called for when the reader needs to use the information, typically in a learning situation. In this kind of reading, associated primarily with "information dense" material, the reader gives attention to the supporting ideas that back up arguments, and use some strategies such as reading paragraph by paragraph,

summarizing the main ideas of each paragraph, underlining, making notes in the margins about questions to ask later, and writing a summary after reading in order to retain the material.

***Using textual discourse devices:***

Effective readers make use of all the syntactic and a rhetorical feature the author has provided. Textual discourse devices provide unity or coherence to a piece of writing. In narrative writing, for example, unity comes from a sequence of events set out in chronological order. In expository writing, unity is achieved through the words and phrases the writer employs to connect the ideas in sentences, paragraphs, and larger segments. The good reader makes use of this prescription to writers: tell the reader what you are going to say.

***Synthesizing knowledge:***

The most elusive but probably the most crucial strategy is making use of previous knowledge. Even for extremely proficient readers, it is a tedious, difficult task to read about totally unfamiliar subject matter. In all reading, one must bring to the activities all of

one's cultural knowledge and experience in the real world, to get sense from the printed page.

On the other hand, Krashen (1985) suggests several useful strategies for improving reading comprehension. Following he sustained "*Silent Reading Approach*," in which student read whatever they want in class and the teacher does the same. This procedure is carried on daily for five to fifteen minute periods. The results are not immediate; but, after a year or so, significant improvements in reading comprehension and vocabulary are reached.

Krashen also suggests that teachers read to their students. As they are read to, students get a better feel for the language and its structure. Overshadowing any one particular strategy is Krashen's belief that, in order to learn to read, one must read. Reading is good for language acquisition. It promotes better spelling; better writing skills, higher reader comprehension, and a more advanced vocabulary.

It is believed that this chapter will serve; first, as a guide for English teachers in carrying out their responsibilities in teaching

English as a Second language, by providing them with some ideas about how they can be more effective as foreign language teachers. Secondly, this chapter should encourage good teachers to follow research and new developments in the field in order to make English language instruction more interesting for students who need to learn English. For the purposes of this master thesis will be provided some techniques that can facilitate learners' reading comprehension as well as effectiveness of the English language acquisition.

## CHAPTER III

This research focuses on the use of teaching techniques that can help third grade English language learners to overcome some reading problems. This attempts to demonstrate that appropriate reading strategies lead students to comprehend lessons.

The selection of this material was based on the idea that reading comprehension is an integral process and certain strategies may allow students to interchange information, ideas, with the teacher and other classmates, thus, facilitating the comprehension of the readings in English which are incorporated into their instruction.

### **PROCEDURE:**

The professional literature related to the topic under investigation was reviewed and the most important points were presented in a summary in the second chapter of this document, entitled the Review of the Literature.

A letter was written requesting the permission of school administrators to gather data in the school selected for this study. The



cooperation of all English teachers who instruct the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> level of the Oxford School was requested and received.

This research basically consisted of the development of instructional materials and an application and evaluation of some instructional techniques for teaching students to read in the English language. This was an attempt to demonstrate that students' interest and motivation were higher if readings were used regularly in the instructional process, helping to improve the English reading comprehension skills.

The population under study was composed by all the students of 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> level attending the Oxford School. The 3<sup>rd</sup> grade was selected randomly, then a pre-test was applied to all the students of this grade to get information about their reading problem skills. Then, the third grade students were divided into two balance groups: the control and the experimental group. The results of the pre-test helped us to form the groups in an appropriate way, so that the experiment could be developed. The experimental group was in contact with some innovative techniques and the other, the control one, used the

traditional reading techniques used by the teachers who teach reading in this school.

The experimental group was exposed to the innovative techniques in a different classroom and at the end of each reading content, all students were integrated in order to see if their comprehension in each lesson was better or worst than those in the traditional group. The post test helped the researcher to compare if the effect of the innovative techniques facilitate a better understanding of the readings or if these techniques did not have any significant influence in the way students can improve their reading skills.

The techniques developed in third grade were performed in one bimonth of class. The techniques to be used were Poster Displays, Questioning , and Previewing. Poster Displays consisted of the use of drawings or pictures. Some pictures were shown and students should relate them with the content. Questioning was used as a tool to the pre and post reading. For example: teacher asked some questions based on the topic in order to help kids to grasp the meaning of the short reading. Previewing was applied to help readers predict what is in the text and facilitate students' comprehension of the text. For

example: teacher asked students to read the title of the reading and give some opinions about the possible content of it. Thus, due to the length of the text , it was divided into four sections with subtitles so that learners could understand the main ideas and sequence of the story.

The hypothesis was tested by using the t- student statistic in comparing two population means. The hypothesis to be tested are:

$$H_0: M_e = M_c$$

$$H_a: M_e > M_c$$

Where  $M_e$  means the population score mean of those learning by using the innovative techniques and  $M_c$  the population score mean of the traditional techniques used by the third grade teacher.

The hypothesis of this research was based on the assumption that the use of innovative techniques could improve student's reading abilities so that they can read better in the future and it is represented  $H_a: M_e > M_c$  . The data gathered is presented in details in the findings section.

One questionnaire was administered to the third graders with the purpose of identifying their level of motivation, their own perceptions of their reading problems, and their opinions about the techniques. A similar questionnaire was administered to their teacher. A third instrument was administered to the fourth and fifth grade teachers to elicit their insights and opinions about the reading problems of this age group.

Responses to the items of the questionnaires analyzed and presented in the findings. The information resulting from the review of the related literature together with the results obtained from the application of the questionnaires led to the conclusions, which are found with the resulting recommendations in Chapter IV of this study.

### **Population and Sample**

This study was conducted with third grade students of the Oxford School in Santiago, Veraguas. The Oxford School is a private bilingual school in Santiago, Veraguas. It offers bilingual education in the kinder, elementary, and secondary levels. This school opened in April 1992. It was located on 8<sup>th</sup> street in Santiago de Veraguas in front of La Abeja bakery. It began with twenty six children and four teachers.

Later, the Oxford School was located on Avenida Sur in Santiago up to 2002. Nowadays, this bilingual school is located in 2<sup>nd</sup> street in front of the Old Hospital. It has one hundred and twenty-six students and twenty-four teachers. This research was conducted with twenty students of the third grade. The age of this third graders may be around nine years old. For the most part they came from middle and upper middle income families of Santiago.

## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides information about some techniques useful to overcome reading deficiencies (Appendix A). It also presents some important observations made by the researcher who piloted the techniques applied; the data and explanations resulting from the research, and the instrument administered to the participating students (Appendix B) and to the participating teachers (Appendix C); and recommendations resulting from the analysis of this data.

#### **OBSERVATIONS:**

During the period of time in which these reading techniques were piloted in the classroom, the researcher who piloted it made many interesting observations. Among the most important observations are the following:

During one bimonth that these techniques were applied, the students who belonged to the experimental group did not feel inhibited because of the classroom's division.

The reading employed was **May Whatever You Do Next Continue Dawn, by Jerome Fletcher**. The first activity consisted of the application of the Previewing technique. At the beginning students had problem to understand what the reading was about because of the new terms presented in the title, as a consequence the Poster Displays technique was used to clarify student's ideas showing them some pictures based on the reading.

To facilitate students comprehension this reading was divided into four sections so that third grade learners could grasp the main idea and vocabulary of the story. These activities allowed students to participate in class and developed practice to reinforce knowledge. For instance: development of matches, written sentences, underlining, complete statements, oral questions, questionnaires.

Some students who came from another school had problems to comprehend the reading, but with the individualized attention, they could be helped.

At the end of each short reading part, students got the reading idea and they were able to write short sentences about the topic.

These techniques also allowed catching the student's attention avoiding any misbehavior by the learners.

Third grade students were not only developing their reading skills, but they were also enjoying and learning.

As the techniques were accompanied by practices, the students had to demonstrate that they had read carefully. Each student wanted to earn a good grade, so they were motivated to prepare themselves as well as possible.

Some students, who had never participated in these kind of instructional activities showed such interest in the readings that they asked the teachers to continue using them after the research period.



## **FINDINGS:**

Three sets of questionnaires were delivered to third grade students, teacher of this grade, and other teachers from fourth and fifth grade. The questionnaire administered to the third grade students consisted of a set of seven questions designed to elicit students' reaction to English reading techniques, after the period during which the reading techniques were used. The use of this questionnaire was based on the assumption that the application of the new techniques would sufficiently affect the student's responses to the questionnaire so that the scores on the instrument could be a valid indication of their reactions to the new activity. Each question had five options with a point value from four to zero (Appendix B).

## **PRESENTATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS**

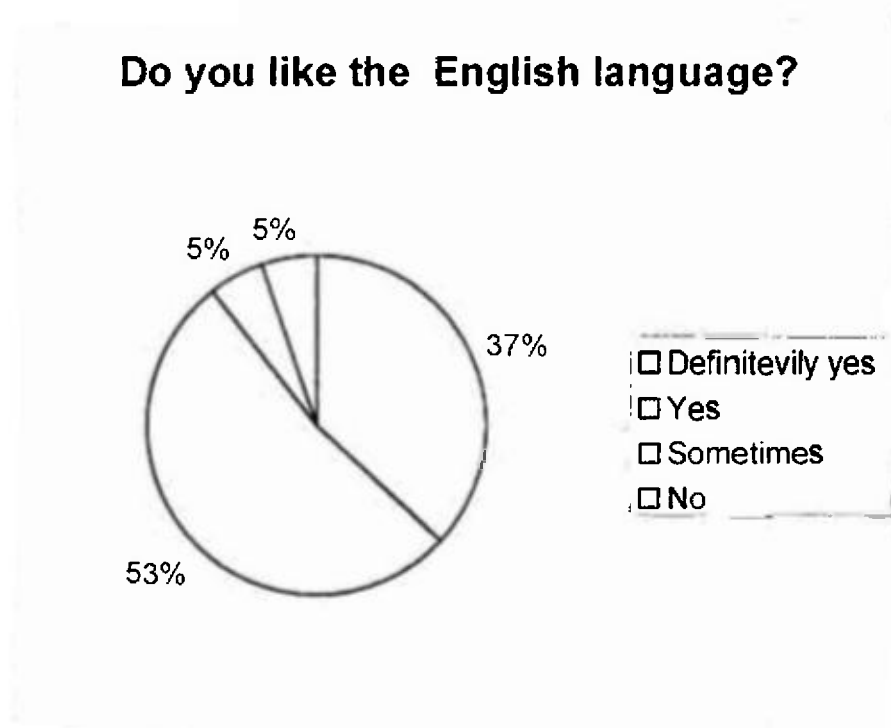
In response to the first question as to whether or not they liked English language. There were five options:

The first option said:	Definitively yes
The second option said:	Yes
The third option said:	Sometimes

The fourth option said:	No
The fifth option said:	Definitively no

These questions were answered by nineteen students and the results are presented in the graphics below:

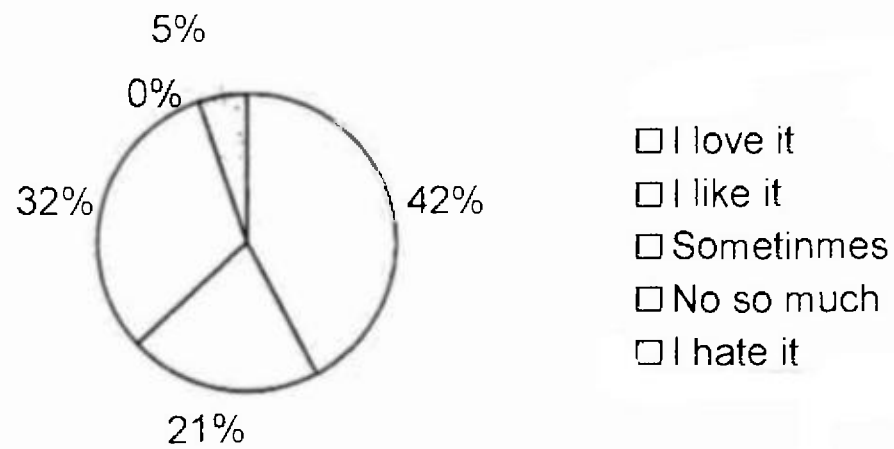
GRAPHIC N° 1



Question number one asked if they liked the English language, 37% of the students answered definitively yes and 53 % said yes, so the results showed that 90 % of the students like the English language.

GRAPHIC N° 2

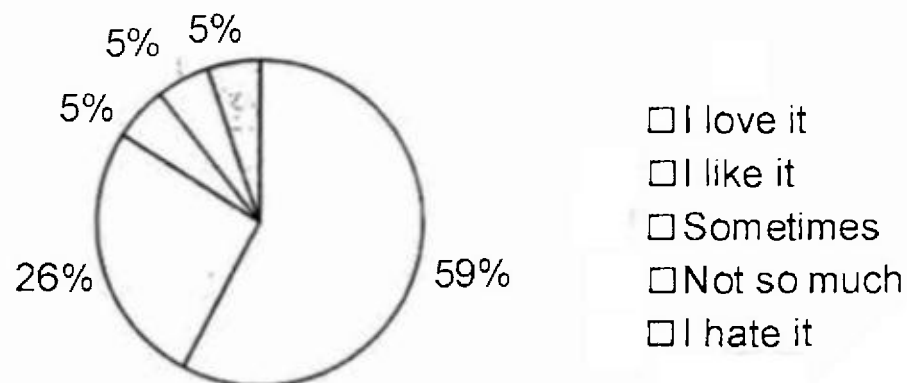
### Do you enjoy studying English?



In response to the second question as to whether or not they enjoy studying English, 42 % of the students answered that they loved it and 21% said that they liked it, so 63% of the students enjoy studying in English.

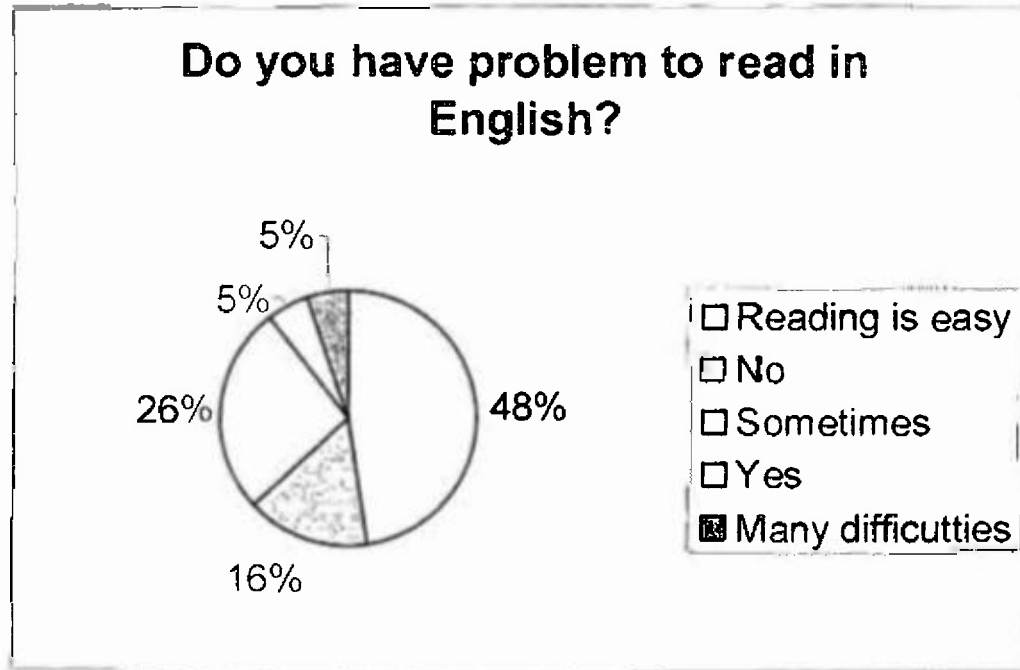
GRAPHIC N °3

### Do you like reading in English?



The third question asked if they liked reading in English, 59 % of the students answered that they love it , and 26 % pointed out that they liked, so 85% of the students were motivated to read in English.

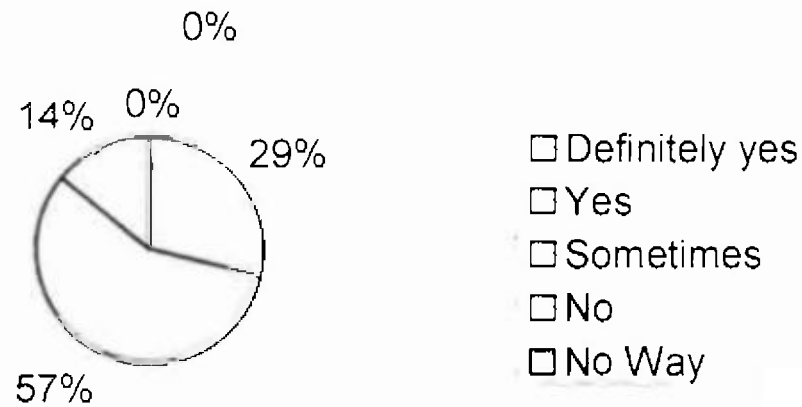
GRAPHIC N° 4



Question number four asked if they had difficulties to read in English, 48 % of the questioners answers that reading is easy and 16 % informed that they did not have difficulties to read in English, so 64 % of the students considered they do not have problem to read in English.

GRAPHIC N° 5

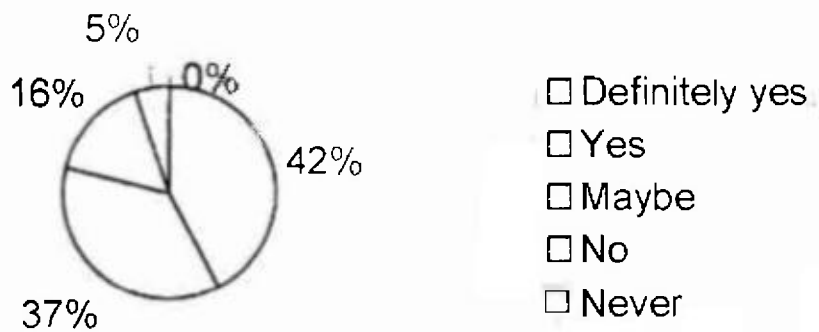
**Do you consider that these techniques can improve your reading skills?**



The fifth question said if they considered that these techniques could improve their reading skills, 57% of the students answered yes and 29% expressed that definitely yes. As a result 86 % of the students considered the techniques applied as being more effective.

GRAPHIC N° 6

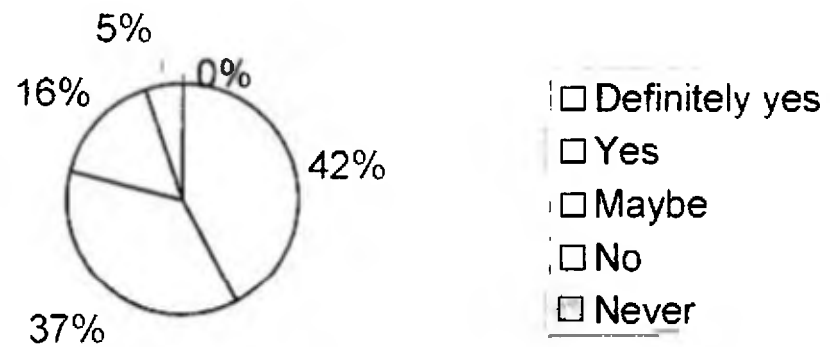
**Do you consider that these techniques can be applied in most of your English subjects?**



In response to the sixth question as to whether or not they considered these techniques could be applied in most of their English subjects, 42% of the students answered that definitively yes, and 37% said yes, so 79% considered the techniques applied as useful for most of the subjects.

GRAPHIC N° 7

**Do you consider that you can read better in the future using these techniques?**



Finally, the seventh question asked if they believed they could read better in the future using these techniques, 79% of them answered that it could be possible.



**PRESENTATION OF THE PRE AND POST TEST  
EVALUATIONS**

EXPERIMENTAL GROUP			CONTROL GROUP		
Student N°	Pre Test	Post Test	Student N°	Pre Test	Post Test
1	3.9	5.0	1	3.2	3.4
2	3.7	4.7	2	3.7	3.9
3	5.0	5.0	3	3.9	4.5
4	4.5	4.7	4	3.4	4.7
5	4.5	5.0	5	4.5	4.7
6	3.7	4.5	6	3.7	4.7
7	4.5	4.7	7	4.5	5.0
8	3.4	3.9	8	4.2	4.7
9	4.5	4.5	9	3.1	4.7
10	3.1	4.5	10	4.5	5.0

Then, we were prepared to conduct the test statistics stated in the methodology. We tested the following pair of statistical hypothesis:

$$H_0: M_e = M_c$$

$$H_a: M_e > M_c$$

Hypothesis testing:

To test the hypothesis, the researcher had to compute several statistic measures such as the mean, the variance, the standard deviations and t- statistic as follow:

First, it was estimated the arithmetic means:

I Control Group

$$\bar{X}_c = \frac{\sum X_i}{n} = \frac{45.3}{10} = 4.53$$

**Experimental Group**

$$\bar{X}_e = \frac{\sum X_i}{n} = \frac{46.5}{10} = 4.65$$

## II. VARIANCES

**Control group Variance**

$$S_c^2 = \frac{\sum X_i^2 - \frac{(\sum X_i)^2}{n}}{n-1} = \frac{207.47 - \frac{(45.3)^2}{10}}{9} = \frac{2.2610}{9} = 0.2512$$

**Experimental Group Variance**

$$S_e^2 = \frac{\sum X_i^2 - \frac{(\sum X_i)^2}{n}}{n-1} = \frac{217.23 - \frac{(46.5)^2}{10}}{9} = \frac{1.0046}{9} = 0.1116$$

### III. STANDARD DEVIATIONS

#### Control Group Standard Deviation

$$S_c = \sqrt{S_c^2} = \sqrt{0.2512} = 0.5012$$

#### Experimental Group Standard Deviation

$$S_e = \sqrt{S_e^2} = \sqrt{0.1116} = 0.334$$

#### Weighted Variance

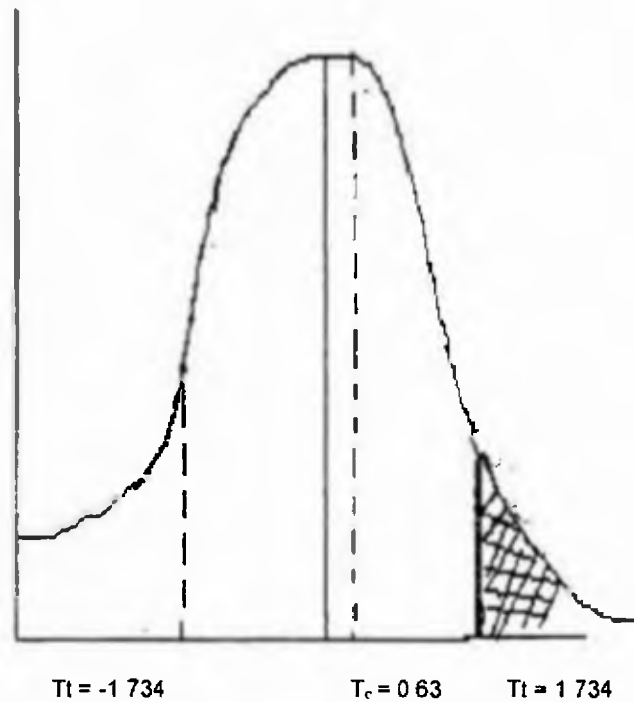
$$S_w^2 = \frac{S_c^2(n_c - 1) + S_e^2(n_e - 1)}{n_c + n_e - 2}$$

$$S_w^2 = \frac{0.2512(g) + 0.1116(g)}{10 + 10 - 2} = \frac{3.2652}{18} = 0.1814$$

#### Test of Hypothesis

$$T_c = \frac{\bar{X}_e - \bar{X}_c}{\sqrt{\frac{S_w^2}{n_c} + \frac{S_w^2}{n_e}}} = \frac{4.65 - 4.530}{\sqrt{\frac{0.1814}{10} + \frac{0.1814}{10}}} = \frac{0.1200}{0.1905} = 0.63$$

$$Tt = T_{2, n_c + n_e - 2} = t_{0.05, 10 + 10 - 2} = T_{0.05, 18} = 1.734$$



According to this result, data does not support the hypothesis. Consequently, it has not been demonstrated that the innovative techniques we suggested promote better results in the development of the learners' reading skills than the traditional ones. This is so at a 0.05 significance level.

It is important to point out that the students got better results in the post test than in the pretest, but the difference was not significant at 0.05 level.

## RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE APPLIED TO THIRD GRADE TEACHER ABOUT THE TECHNIQUES EMPLOYED:

Third grade teacher considered Poster Displays, Questioning, and Previewing valuable techniques to motivate and encourage students to comprehend readings.

These techniques facilitated the use of vocabulary and avoided learner's translation into Spanish language.

At the same time, these techniques encouraged learners to participate and allowed them to clarify any doubt.

The use of pictures helped learners to associate them with phrases, so they could comprehend the reading texts better, because students' lexicon in this level is not so broad.

These techniques allowed the student's active participation in English and in the practice performance.

## ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE APPLIED TO FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE TEACHERS.

Questionnaires applied to the teachers of fourth and fifth grade presented interesting results too. This questionnaire consisted of ten questions.

Question number one was about what type of reading materials English teachers use, as well as if they selected specific readings and how often. In this question, teachers answered that they use readings in science, spelling, grammar, and reading subjects. These readings are based on fictions, fables, scientific facts, entertainment, mystery, and ghost stories. They pointed out that there were specific readings used according to the lessons that they should follow in their programs.

The second question asked how they used these readings. Teachers stated that they use reading as a tool to increase students' vocabulary, to introduce unknown words, to reinforce some grammatical structures, to elicit a dialogue about the topic, to encourage exchange of ideas among learners, so that learners could feel motivated to read these readings.

In response to the third question, if they had observed some student's problems to comprehend readings. They expressed that it happened sometimes because of the lack of comprehension of some technical words, and idiomatic expressions. Thus, in response to the question number four about what techniques they used to help learners in their reading problems, they answered that they use role plays, debate, group work, underlining questionnaires, problem solving and so forth.

Question number five asked whether or not they considered that students enjoy readings that school provides them. Teachers stated that students sometimes enjoy the readings, not always because they are so complex taking into consideration students background knowledge and ages.

Question number six asked if they considered that Poster Displays, Previewing, Questioning techniques could be useful in the development of the English language skills. Teachers believed that these techniques could foster a great achievement in the English language skills.

The next question asked whether or not they considered that these techniques could be difficult to comprehend for the students. Teachers

said that they considered that these techniques could be very useful to help students' to grasp the idea of a reading because they are very active and interesting. At the same time, question seven asked if they considered that learners could present problems to develop the practice. Teachers considered that it would not happen because the individual attention allowed teachers to clarify doubts in the students.

Finally, question number nine asked that if they considered that these techniques could be applied in most of the English subjects. Teachers pointed out that Posters Displays could be used depending on the reading content as well as Questioning and Previewing, and that they were very necessary to provide students hints or guidelines about the reading context.



## CONCLUSION

All of the teachers who participated in this study, made interesting observations, which in conjunction with the students' answers to the questionnaires, the results of the pre and post tests, the general observations made by the researcher, resulted in the following conclusion:

➤ In spite of their limited knowledge of the basic language elements and the four basic language skills, the students who participated in this study, found the techniques effective and enjoyable. The student's attitude toward the instructional techniques was obviously positive because some of them found the techniques interesting, useful, and relevant.

➤ To overcome reading problems it is important that since kindergarten, kids may be familiarized with the phonological system based on the relations of letters into words and the use of vocabulary to be familiarized with the reading comprehension.

➤ Thus, with the use of these techniques, teachers can overcome the reading problems and also help learners in the development of the speaking, writing and listening skills because reading facilitates learners acquisition of the language elements for communication purposes.

➤ Moreover, Poster Displays, Previewing, and Questioning were useful techniques to overcome reading problems, but there are also other techniques described in appendix A, that are available to help kids to overcome any reading deficiency, especially in subjects such as science and reading that due to their complexity affect the student's comprehension.

➤ The researcher can not reject the null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ). Therefore, there was no sufficient statistical evidence to support the alternative hypothesis  $H_a: M_e > M_c$ . That means, the use of innovative techniques will not improve the students reading skills than the traditional one. Nevertheless, it was demonstrated that the techniques applied enhance motivation helping to develop a positive

attitude toward the reading activity which is an important element in learning and developing any linguistic skill.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations here stated are considered useful in obtaining better results in the reading process, both as an activity to increase students' interest in learning the English language, as well as in developing reading comprehension and other language skills.

Although, the benefits resulting from the use of these techniques with the sample group were not significant according to the statistical evidence to support the  $H_a$  hypothesis, it is recommended to develop more research in this area, so that it can be demonstrated if the innovative techniques facilitate student's brain development in constructing and creating new structures more than just developing their reading skills.

The techniques such as Poster Displays, previewing and questioning, are recommended as useful techniques to develop students positive attitude toward reading which in turn may help to improve their reading abilities.

It is recommended that the teaching techniques should be varied, so that students experience something different in every class.

This contributes to make classes more enjoyable for both students and teacher, and most importantly, students do not feel uninterested in the class.

It is important that teachers use appropriate visual aids according to the reading topics, and it is recommended that teachers know the procedure of each technique in order to get good results.

In order to promote the development of English communication skills in the classroom, teachers are urged to comment on the readings in English as well as to motivate students to do so.

Finally, to apply these techniques, teachers should consider student's level, subject studied, background knowledge, interest, and objectives so that students can get successful results in their students performance.

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# APPENDIX A



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## **READING TECHNIQUES GUIDE**

### **a.1 SEMANTIC MAP:**

Characteristic: The first activity that activates students appropriate background knowledge of a given topic is the semantic map (Freedman and Reynolds (1980); Heimlich and Pittelman (1986)). The map is an organized arrangement of vocabulary concepts which reveals what students already know about the topic and provides them with a base upon which they can construct the new information learned from the text.

#### **Procedure:**

The teacher begins by telling students the topic they are going to read about, and then asks them to make free associations with it. That is, students write down whatever words they think of when they hear the topic. Then the teacher asks students to group their associated words into categories and helps them label the categories. After reading the selection, the students may wish to revise the original map. The resulting map is the integration of students' pre-existing knowledge and their knowledge acquired from the text.

At first, students may have difficulty in categorizing free associations. The teacher can help them by conducting the discussion with the whole class. When students offer their associations, the teacher can list the responses on the chalkboard and discuss with the students how to put the associations into categories and what to label them. If there is more than one way to construct the relations among different concepts, the teacher may show students the different possibilities. This demonstration indicates how concepts can be organized around a topic.

After some illustrations, students can be divided into groups to carry out the discussion in teams. Interestingly, each group will usually come up with different versions, categories, and labels. The teacher may ask a representative from each group to draw the map on the chalkboard and decide if the concepts are appropriately constructed. From the demonstration, modeling, and discussion, students themselves will gradually learn how to categorize and label associations appropriately. The same procedure can be applied to the post reading discussion about revising the maps.

When generating associations, students are encouraged to look up new words in their dictionaries. The teacher may also consult a dictionary, preferably English-English, to help the students determine if the meaning and usage of new words fit the topic.

The following is a brief sample of a semantic map done by my students on the topic of North American Indians:

Hunting: buffalo, spear, bow, and arrow

Lifestyle: nomad, riding horses, tent

Clothing: animal skin, long hair, feather

Ceremony: chief, dance, song, legend

Movie: Dance with Wolves, Pocahontas

#### **a.2 QUESTIONING:**

**Characteristic:** Another type of activity is **questioning**. Questions may be generated by the teacher or by the students and should be done before the reading, rather than after the reading. Reutzel (1985) has proposed the Reconciled Reading Lesson to help teachers form effective pre-reading questions. Teachers who adopt the Reconciled Reading Lesson, reverse the textbook sequence by

forming pre-reading questions from the comprehension questions that appear in the textbook after the reading selection or in the teachers' manual. A problem in class is that not all the questions originally designed as post-reading exercises can be appropriately converted to pre-reading activities. For instance, a question like "What is the main idea of the second paragraph?" does not provide learners any clue to the content of the passage and fails to stimulate their prior knowledge, which would enable them to make feasible predictions.

***Procedure:***

How do students generate text-related questions even before they read the passage? Williams (1987) gives an interesting three-phase approach to reading, with particular attention to the pre-reading phase. The approach begins by introducing the topic of the passage that students are going to read. Once the topic is presented, students are asked to work in groups and write a list in two columns. The first column lists things about the topic that they are sure of, and the second listing that they are not sure or do not know.

It is suggested that each member of the group in turn volunteer a fact or question, so that no group member is neglected. Afterwards,

the teacher asks a representative from each group to write one or two items, which other groups may not have, thought of, to be included. In the reading phase. Students are asked to read the text to verify what they were sure of and find the answers to questions of which they were not sure.

Using the list on the board, the teacher can ask students which sentences provide evidence for their responses. In the post-reading phase, the students are assigned tasks, which consolidate their prior knowledge of the topic with information acquired from the text. For example, they may write a count of whales based on the information in their lists, or they may research the questions on their list that have not been addressed in the text.

William's (1987) three-phrase approach provides an interesting way to activate students' prior knowledge and enhance their motivation to read. However, it has its practical limitations. For example, it may not be appropriate for an opinion-giving texts or fiction. It is best used with text that provides factual information. Furthermore, the length of the text should be moderate, because longer passages, which usually

express more complicated concepts, may open too many possibilities for the students to questions.

As a result, the students may spend too much time generating questions in the pre-reading phase, and the list of question may be too long to handle effectively. One possible solution to this problem is for the teacher to divide the text into sections and implement the approach section by section.

### **a.3 PREVIEWING:**

#### **Characteristics:**

The aim of previewing is to help readers predict or make some educated guesses about what is in the text and thus activate effective top-down processing for reading comprehension. Several stimuli in a text, such as the title, photographs, illustrations, or subtitles, are usually closely connected to the author's ideas and content. So, based on any of them, students can make predictions about the content of the text. To make more specific predictions, however, students obviously need more guidance.

*Procedure:*

The following guidelines can help:

➤ Ask the students to read the title of the article. Do they know anything about this subject?

Have the students read the first few paragraphs, which generally introduce the topics discussed in the text. Can they determine general themes of the text?

➤ Then ask them to read the first sentence of each paragraph, usually the topic sentence, which gives the main idea of the paragraph. Can they determine the major points of the article?

➤ Read the last paragraph; this often reveals the conclusions of the author. Have the students discuss how the author organizes the information to present his point of view.

➤ The students then read the entire article for more detailed information. Since they already have an overview of the text, they can understand the rest of the information much more easily.



The successful application of previewing depends on the presence of certain conventional features of English writing, namely, topic sentences and paragraphs of introduction and conclusion. However, not all kinds of text have these rhetorical features. Often, an expository passage follows the pattern more closely and, therefore, is more suitable for the steps described above.

## **B- MOTIVATION ACTIVITIES**

Since coaxing children to read can often be a major problem, teachers need to use every available resource at their disposal to motivate young readers. Building a foundation for a class-based reading program begins with an informal classroom atmosphere. Learners should be able to identify closely with the teacher as a reading mentor, who is willing to share his/her own early reading experience with young learners. The use of audiotapes and videotapes, although useful in initiating the further exploration of text, do not replace teachers who arouse students' interests by reading aloud-selected extracts from well-chosen texts.

According to Latha (1999), the following strategies, and activities are very valuable in encouraging reading:

### **b.1 READING TEAMS:**

Divide the class into reading teams that are named after popular reading series such as The Sweet Valley Kids and The Jug Valley Juniors. Children can create attractive bookmarks and badges to show their allegiance to their particular teams. Two large posters with the names of these teams may be prominently displayed in the class. Each team member's name should be inscribed on a broad arrow which points towards a central target area.

Regular glances at the signatures on the book list of each child allow the teacher to draw a smiling face or a similar symbol on the arrows of individual readers. A predetermined number of rewards enable the team to earn a colorful sticker in the central target area. At the end of the agreed period, the team with the largest number of stickers in the area, as well as the runners-up, earns rewards that have also been negotiated by teacher and pupils in advance. Prior discussions between the teacher and pupils should determine realistic targets and set time-limits to fulfill the ongoing aims of the programmed.

With the help of the art teacher, reading teams may design and display colorful collages composed of favorite book titles. Young

learners should also be encouraged to develop visual literacy by translating verbal texts, like short stories and poems, into visual texts by means of pictures and graphic illustrations. This type of activity is useful in fostering inferential comprehension, allowing students to read between the lines.

### **b.2 POSTER DISPLAYS:**

Class posters displaying newspaper reviews, illustrations, and synopses from publisher's catalogues may create an awareness of the variety of publications produced for young readers and help everyone to keep track of new books by favorite writers.

### **b.3 BOOK REPORTS:**

Children should submit brief, structured book reports, which are written under specified headings. These may include a listing of main ideas and supporting details, the discussion of favorite characters, the reader's personal opinions, or a short section on vocabulary extension. Reading activities thus become more focused and enable children to become more coherent and concise in their responses. Since the reading programmed allows children to have input into the selection of

core reading materials, getting students to read the texts and to submit book reports is not as onerous a task for the teacher as it usually is.

Written reports can play a vital role in promoting critical literacy. According to Latha (1999), reading "...should be treated as creative and challenging and interpretative." Reciprocal reading based on structured book reports encourages interactions and debates, thereby proving a useful starting point for critically examining texts. Students, who have read the same texts, tend to interpret these from varying perspectives, and it soon becomes apparent that a particular text can evoke a variety of individual responses and interpretations.

Thus, children learn that meaning does not reside in the text but is created by their own unique interactions with the text.

#### **b.4 CREATIVE ACTIVITIES:**

Teachers can motivate children to read by developing practical as well as creative activities linked to the various subjects. This may include such diverse activities as building kites or model airplanes, growing herbs, or preparing simple meals. The science and geography teachers can help select suitable reading materials for these types of activities.

Show and Tell sessions act as links between reading nonfiction and encouraging expository oral discourse.

#### **b.5 READING/ WRITING AREA:**

A specific area of the classroom should be reserved for the children's own writing. Time should be set at regular intervals for reading and discussing materials. In multicultural classrooms, the writing wall can become a forum for cross-cultural exchange, especially if individuals or groups are encouraged to write down and illustrate short family histories or popular folk tales from their own communities. Producing class magazines that cater to a variety of interests and abilities can integrate the processes of reading and writing

#### **b.6 OUTSIDE-CLASS ACTIVITIES:**

Reading activities outside of the classroom not only increase the reader's motivation, but they also enable the teacher to overcome the constraints imposed by having large numbers of students in small classrooms. Reciprocal and nonreciprocal reading skill (Widdowson (1978)) can be achieved more easily in an outdoor setting. Reciprocal reading allows students to interact with one another in interpreting

these materials. It can include choral renditions of poetry, oral book reports, and dramatizations of short stories. Team members may use this environment to boost team-reading targets.

Nonreciprocal reading, which enables the students to interpret and understand information according to their own experiences, can be incorporated quite easily into outdoor reading activities, since children are often content to find cool, shady areas to read books undisturbed. The teacher can derive maximum benefit from the relaxed atmosphere by having individual consultations with students who are experiencing difficulty in attaining the minimum targets.

# APPENDIX B

APPENDIX B:

**Cuestionario para estudiantes**

Lea cuidadosamente. Luego encierre el número que más se acerca a su opinión de acuerdo a cada pregunta. Por ejemplo, si su respuesta es "no" definitivo o "nunca" encierre el número que está sobre dicha palabra. Encierre un sólo número para cada pregunta.

**1. ¿Le gusta a usted el idioma Inglés?**

4                      3    2                      1                      0  
definitivamente sí    sí    algo                      no                      definitivamente no

**2. ¿Disfruta usted estudiando inglés?**

4                      3                      2                      1                      0  
me encanta    me gusta                      más o menos                      no mucho                      lo odio

**3. ¿Le gusta a usted leer en inglés?**

4                      3                      2                      1                      0  
me encanta    me gusta                      más o menos                      no mucho                      lo odio

**4. ¿Ha tenido usted dificultades para leer en inglés?**

4                      3                      2                      1                      0  
leer es fácil    no                      algunas veces                      sí                      demasiadas dificultades



5. **¿Considera usted que las técnicas usadas esta bimestre pueden mejorar sus habilidades al leer?**

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_  
definitivamente sí    Sí algo    no    de ninguna manera

6. **¿Considera usted que estas técnicas deben ser aplicadas en la mayoría de sus materias?**

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_  
definitivamente sí    sí    quizás no    no    definitivamente no

7. **¿Considera usted que leería más en inglés en el futuro usando estas técnicas?**

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_  
definitivamente sí    sí    algo    no    jamás

APPENDIX B:

Questionnaire for students

Read carefully. Then, circle the number that it is closer to your opinion according to each question. For example, if your answer is definitely not or never you should circle the number that is on this word. Only circle a number for each question.

1 Do you like studying English ?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0  
definitively yes    yes            something            definitively not    not

2. Do you enjoy studying English?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0  
I love            I like            more or less            not a lot            I hate it

3. Do you like to read in English?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0  
I love            I like            more or less            not a lot            I hate it

4. Have you had difficulties to read in English?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_

read is easy    not            sometimes    yes    many difficulties

5. Do you consider that the techniques used during this bimonthly could improve your reading abilities?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_

definitively yes    yes            something            not            no way

6. Do you consider that these techniques should be applied in most of your subjects?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_

definitively yes    yes            maybe            not            definitively not

7. Will you read more in English in the future using these techniques?

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 1 \_\_\_\_\_ 0 \_\_\_\_\_

definitively yes    yes            something            not            never

# APPENDIX C

APPENDIX C

CUESTIONARIO PARA EL MAESTRO DE TERCER GRADO

El siguiente cuestionario tiene como finalidad que usted evalúe la técnica Poster Displays y Previewing and Questioning.

1. ¿Considera usted que estas técnicas fueron interesante para los estudiantes? Explique.

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2. ¿Cómo reaccionó el estudiante en la aplicación de la técnica?

¿Hubo reacciones positivas y negativas?

Explique.

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3¿ Considera usted que estas técnicas ayudaron a aclarar problemas de lectura en el alumno? Explique.

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4¿ Fueron las prácticas más comprensibles por el uso de las técnicas? Explique.

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## APPENDIX C

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE THIRD GRADE TEACHER

The following questionnaire has as purpose that you evaluate Poster Displays, Previewing and Questioning techniques:

1. Do you consider that these techniques were interesting for the students? Explain.

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2 How was the students' response in the application of these techniques? Were there positive and negative results?

Explain.

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3. Do you consider that these techniques help to clarify reading problems in the student? Explain.

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4. Were the practice more comprehensible because of use of the techniques? Explain.

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## CUESTIONARIO PARA MAESTROS.

El propósito de este instrumento es conocer que tipo de técnicas los maestros están utilizando para ayudar a los estudiantes en sus problemas de lectura.

Gracias por su cooperación!

1. ¿Utiliza usted lecturas en Inglés? Qué clase? Seleccione usted lecturas específicas relacionados al material? ¿Cuán a menudo?

Explique

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2. ¿Cómo las utiliza?

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3. ¿Ha observado usted problemas en los estudiantes para comprender las lecturas? Explique.

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4. ¿Qué técnicas utiliza usted para ayudar a los estudiantes en sus problemas de lectura?

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5. ¿Considera usted que los estudiantes disfrutan las lecturas que la escuela les brinda? Explique.

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6. ¿Podrían las técnicas: "Poster Displays", "Previewing" y "Questioning" mejorar la habilidad de la lectura de los estudiantes en el Idioma Inglés? Explique

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7. ¿Podrían estas técnicas ser difíciles de comprender para los estudiantes?, Explique

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8. ¿Podrían los estudiantes presentar dificultades para realizar las prácticas?

Explique \_\_\_\_\_

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9. ¿Considera usted que estas técnicas deberían ser aplicadas en la mayoría de las materias en Inglés?, Explique...

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10. Comentarios:

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QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS OF FOURTH AND FIFTH GRADE

The purpose of this instrument is to know what types of techniques teachers are implementing to help students in their reading deficiencies.

Thank you for your cooperation!

1. Do you use readings in English? What kind? Do you select specific readings related to the material? How often? Explain

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2. How do you use them?

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3. Have you observed problems in the students to understand the readings? Explain.

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4. What kinds of techniques do you use to help the students in their reading problems?

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5. Do you consider that the students enjoy the readings that the school offers them? Explain

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6. Could Poster Displays, Previewing and Questioning be useful techniques to improve students' reading skills in the English language?

Explain

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7. Could these techniques be difficult to understand for the students?

Explain

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8. Could students have difficulties to carry out the practices?

Explain

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9. Do you consider that these techniques should be applied in most of the English subjects? Explain.

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10. Comments.

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DIDACTIC

RESOURCES

**READING USED  
DURING THE PRE  
AND POST TEST**

## The Soccer Game

Billy and Dad come to the park.

They look for Don, Sam, and Jose

Then Billy says: "Look, Dad!

I see my friends, they are in that soccer game.

"Billy"! cries Sam, Can you play soccer with us?

"Yes, Can you?" cries Jose.

Don says: "Look me kick the ball"

Billy looks at Dad, he says I am going to play soccer.

**VOCABULARY OF THE READING APPLIED TO THE PRE AND  
POST TEST:**

Soccer

Look-see

Kick

Ball

Say

Play

Friends

Come

Game

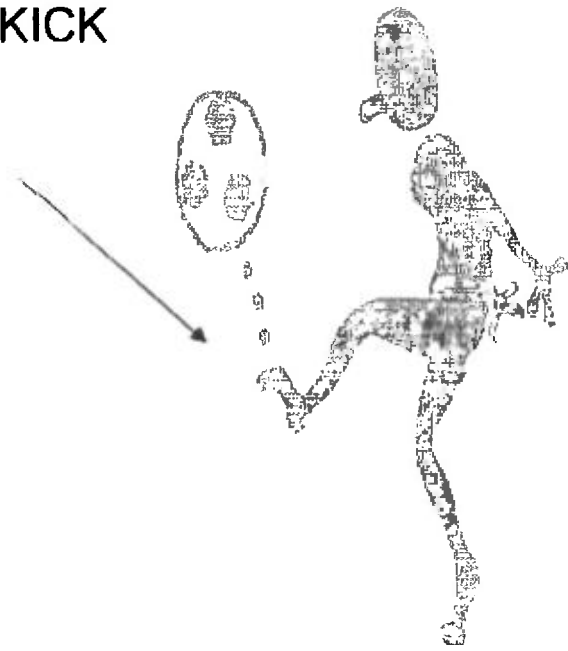
# SOCCER GAME



BALL



KICK



LOOK  
SEE



Pre-test

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Score: 15 points.  
True or false. "T" to the true and "F" to the false. ( 4 points)

- 1) Don kicks the ball \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) Billy and Peter come to the park \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) Jose plays soccer \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Billy plays baseball \_\_\_\_\_

II PART. MULTIPLE CHOICE: CIRCLE THE CORRECT ONE. ( 5 points)

- 1) The name of the story is:  
a. The volleyball game    b. The baseball game    c. The soccer game    d. The football game
  
- 2) The name of the game is :  
a. Soccer                      b. Football                      c. Volleyball                      d. Tennis
  
- 3) The name of the children are:  
a. Peter and Carlos              b. David and Sims              c. Sam and Don              d. Alex and Dad.
  
- 4) Who kicks the ball:  
a. Jose                              b. Sam                              c. Don                              d. Billy
  
- 5) Billy plays soccer with:  
a. His brothers                      b. Dad                              c. Friends                      d. Teachers

III Part. Write three words of the vocabulary and illustrate them. (6 points)

Good Luck!

**READING STORY  
APPLIED DURING  
CLASS  
INSTRUCTION**



## May Whatever You Do Next Continue Until Dawn

Jerome Fletcher—



'Rats!' said Belinda as she pulled the knife out of the back of her piggy bank and a two pence piece fell into the small pile of coins that lay on her bed. She counted the coins.

'Not enough to buy a plug, let alone a whole stereo system!' she whined. Belinda shook the pig angrily. The rattle told her that there were only a few more coins left inside. She sat on the edge of her bed and pouted. 'If only my fairy godmother were here!' she said.

No sooner had the words left Belinda's lips than a small glow began to appear in the middle of her tiny bedroom. This glow got bigger and bigger and

brighter and brighter until there, dressed in a brilliant white gown and carrying a wand in her hand, stood Belinda's fairy godmother.

'Why are you looking so sad, Belinda?' asked her fairy godmother, tenderly.

'Oh, fairy godmother,' she replied. 'I have spent so much money on flowers for the sick children, and I bought my granny and grandpa such an expensive gift for their wedding anniversary, and I gave such a lot of money to the Donkey Hospital, that now I don't have enough left to buy my little brother a birthday present.'

As she spoke a large tear appeared at the edge of her eye and rolled down her cheek.

‘There, there!’ said her fairy godmother, putting an arm round Belinda to comfort her. ‘As a reward for all your goodness I am going to give you a little blessing. May whatever you do next continue until dawn.’

And with that, the fairy godmother waved her wand, letting fall a shower of golden sparkle, and disappeared.

Now, if you believed what Belinda was saying – all that nonsense about flowers for sick children and presents for Granny and Grandpa and donations to the Donkey Hospital – you’ll believe anything. It’s just a huge pack of lies. And what is extraordinary is how someone as unpleasant as Belinda managed to get a fairy godmother in the first place! I always thought they only appeared to good little children who were poor and had wicked stepmothers! Obviously not. Anyway, Belinda wasn’t feeling any better now than she had been before her fairy godmother appeared.

‘A fat lot of good she was!’ said Belinda. ‘What’s the use of a fairy godmother if she won’t even lend me a fiver! Ah well, never mind. Let’s see how much is left in this pig.’

Belinda picked up her piggy bank and, with the knife, she began to prise out the remaining coins through the slit in his back. Each time a few came out, Belinda was convinced that that was the last of them. But no. Something very strange was happening. She kept shaking the piggy bank to discover that there were still a few more coins inside. And Belinda continued to prise coins out of



the piggy bank all night long, just as her fairy godmother had said. It was only as the sun peeped over the horizon and filled Belinda’s bedroom with the rosy glow of dawn that the piggy bank no longer rattled when she shook it. It was now empty, but on the bed was a huge pile of coins. Belinda clapped her hands with glee.

‘Now I can go and buy that stereo system I’ve always wanted! Oh, thank you, fairy godmother! And if that scummy little brother of mine thinks he’s going to listen to it, he’s got another think coming.’



<sup>3</sup> [Belinda scooped the pile of coins into a large plastic bag and set off for the shop. But on the way there, she was stopped by the huge and terrifying Byram Blunderbuss. He asked her threateningly, 'What have you got in the bag?'

Belinda opened the bag to show Byram the stash of coins. His eyes lit up.

'Blimey, Belinda! Where d'you get all that dosh from?'

'I've got a fairy godmother. She gave it to me.'

'Oh, sure!' Course you have! Well, I think you stole it and you better give it to me, or else I'll ...'

Belinda swung her bag of cash at Byram and bashed him round the head with it, sending him crashing to the pavement.

'Now, that's what I call spending power!' said Belinda, looking down at the hapless Byram. 'Perhaps it'll teach you to keep your grubby little hands off my dosh!'

And Belinda continued on her way to the shop.

On her way back from the shop, she came across Byram again. He was sitting on the pavement, rubbing his head and nursing a black eye. He looked so miserable that Belinda's heart softened.

'Sorry I had to bash you with my cash, Byram. Still, it was your own fault. I tell you what, next time my fairy godmother appears I'll send her round to you, and perhaps she'll do for you what she did for me.'

Belinda explained the words her fairy godmother had uttered, and how once she had started counting

her coins she couldn't stop until dawn, by which time she had a painted shipload of money.

A few weeks later, Byram Blunderbuss got the shock of his life when the small bright glow appeared in his bedroom and grew before his eyes into Belinda's fairy godmother.

'Don't be afraid, young Byram. I am here to help you. Belinda has told me all about your black eye, how you were collecting money for orphans when those wicked boys attacked you and took it all. Some people have no shame. Well, as a reward I shall make a little wish for you. May whatever you do next continue until dawn.'

And with that, the fairy godmother disappeared. Byram Blunderbuss got quite beside himself with excitement at the thought of all the things he'd be able to buy after tonight.

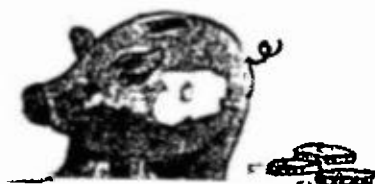
'However,' he said to himself, 'if I'm going to be up all night counting my savings, I'd better just go to the toilet first.'

During the night Byram's mum got up and went to the bathroom. She knocked on the door and called out: 'Byram, are you all right? You seem to have been in there an awful long time.'

'I'm not feeling too well, Mum. How long is it till dawn?'

'What a strange question! I don't know. About three hours, I suppose.'

From inside the bathroom, Byram Blunderbuss let out a pitiful groan. 'Three hours! Oh no!'



## The Well

Gene Kemp



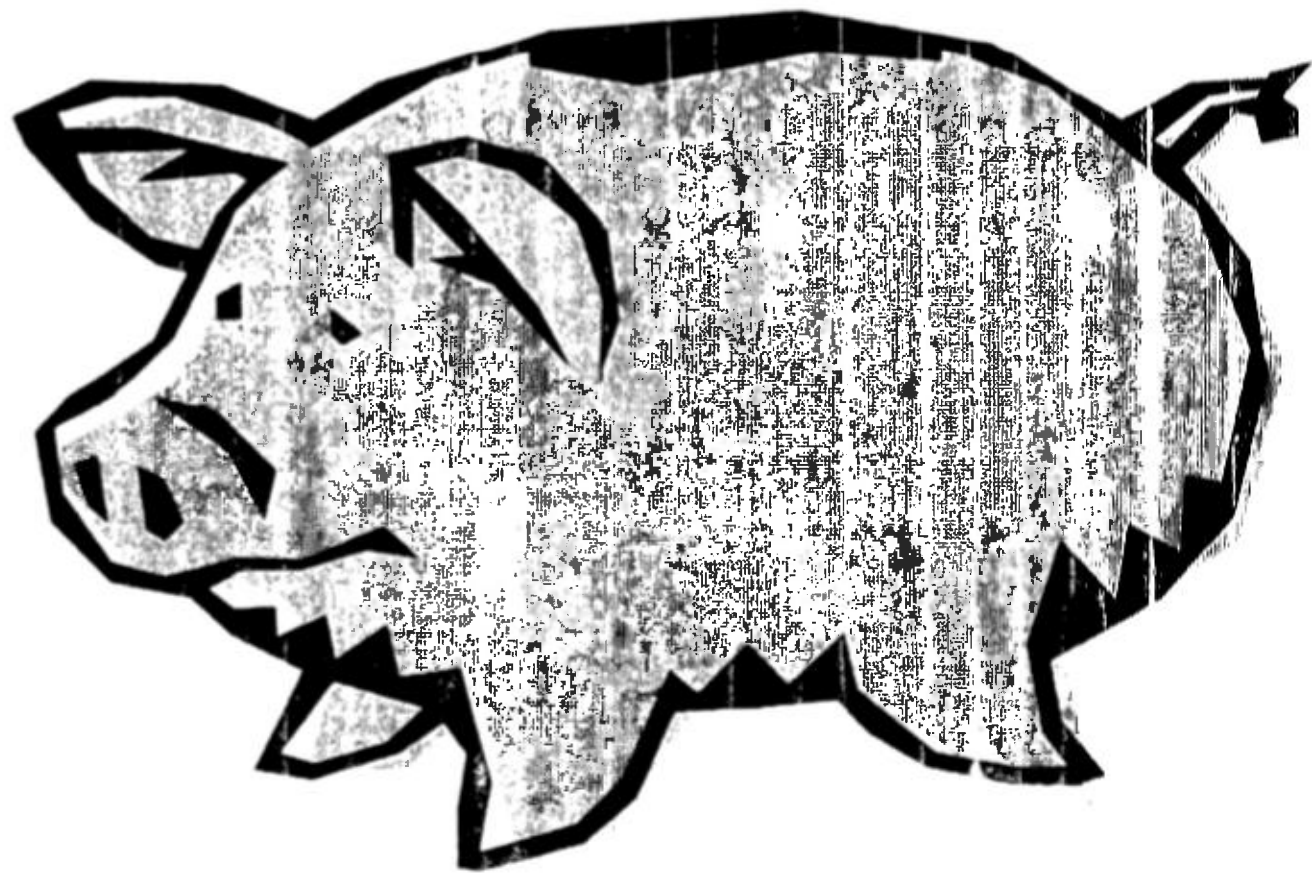
'There's a dragon lives in the well, Annie. That's why you mustn't go near it. I've told you a hundred times.'

We walked away from the well and sat on the stile that led to the fields stretching for miles and miles out to the great wide world.

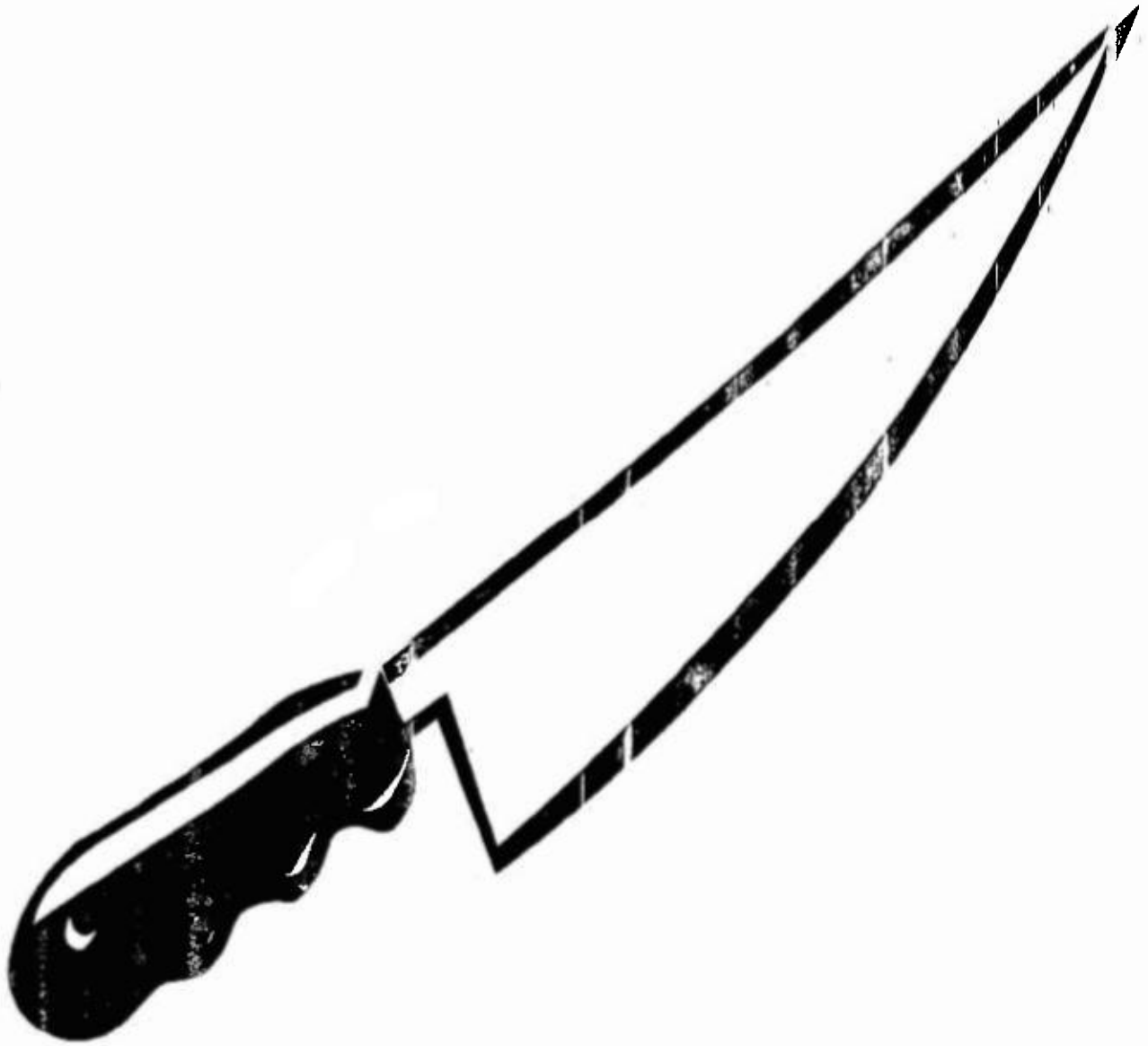
'What's the dragon like?'

**VOCABULARY  
OF THE READING  
STORY**

# PIGGY BANK



KNIFE



# GRANDFATHER

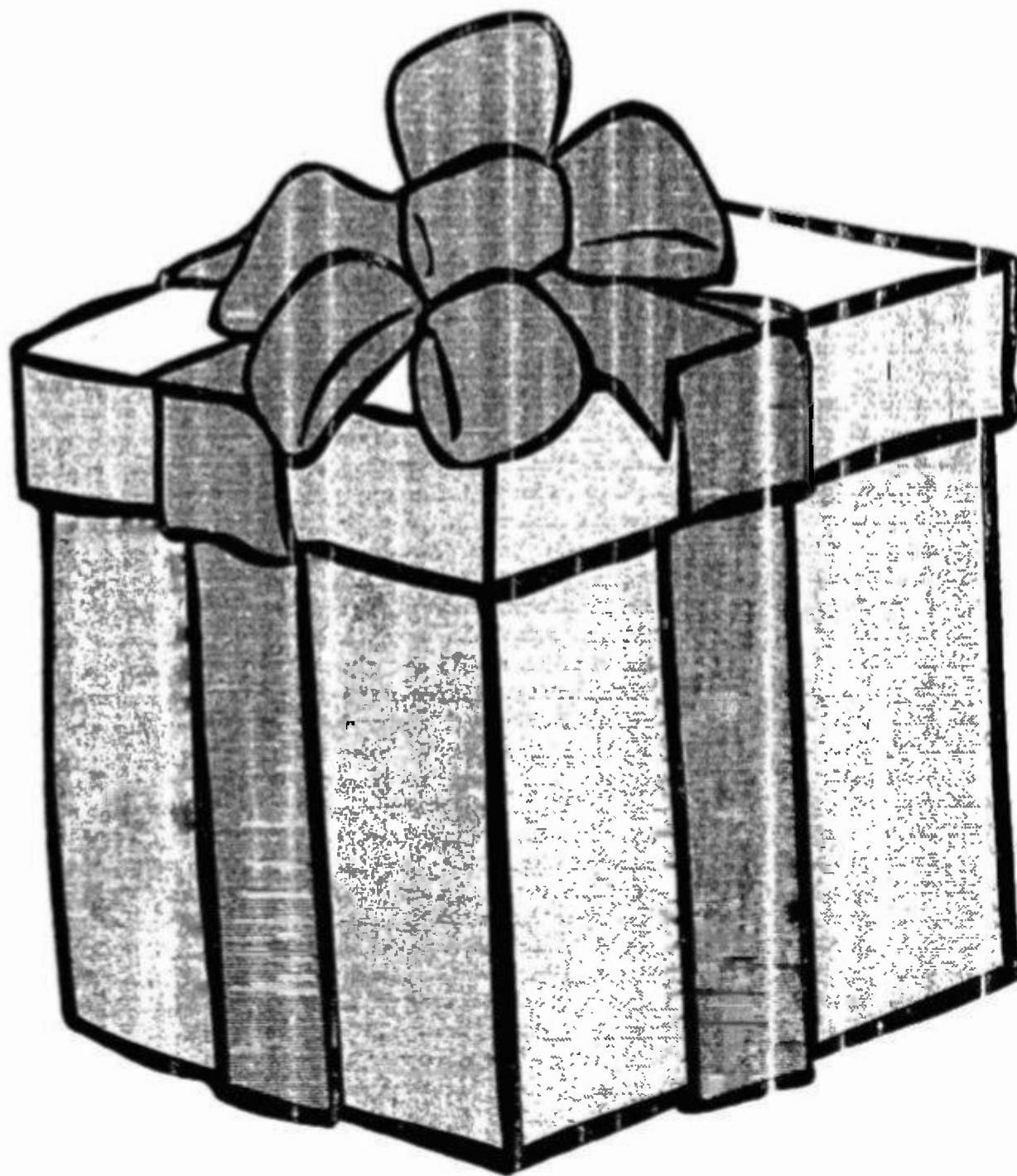




# GRANDMOTHER



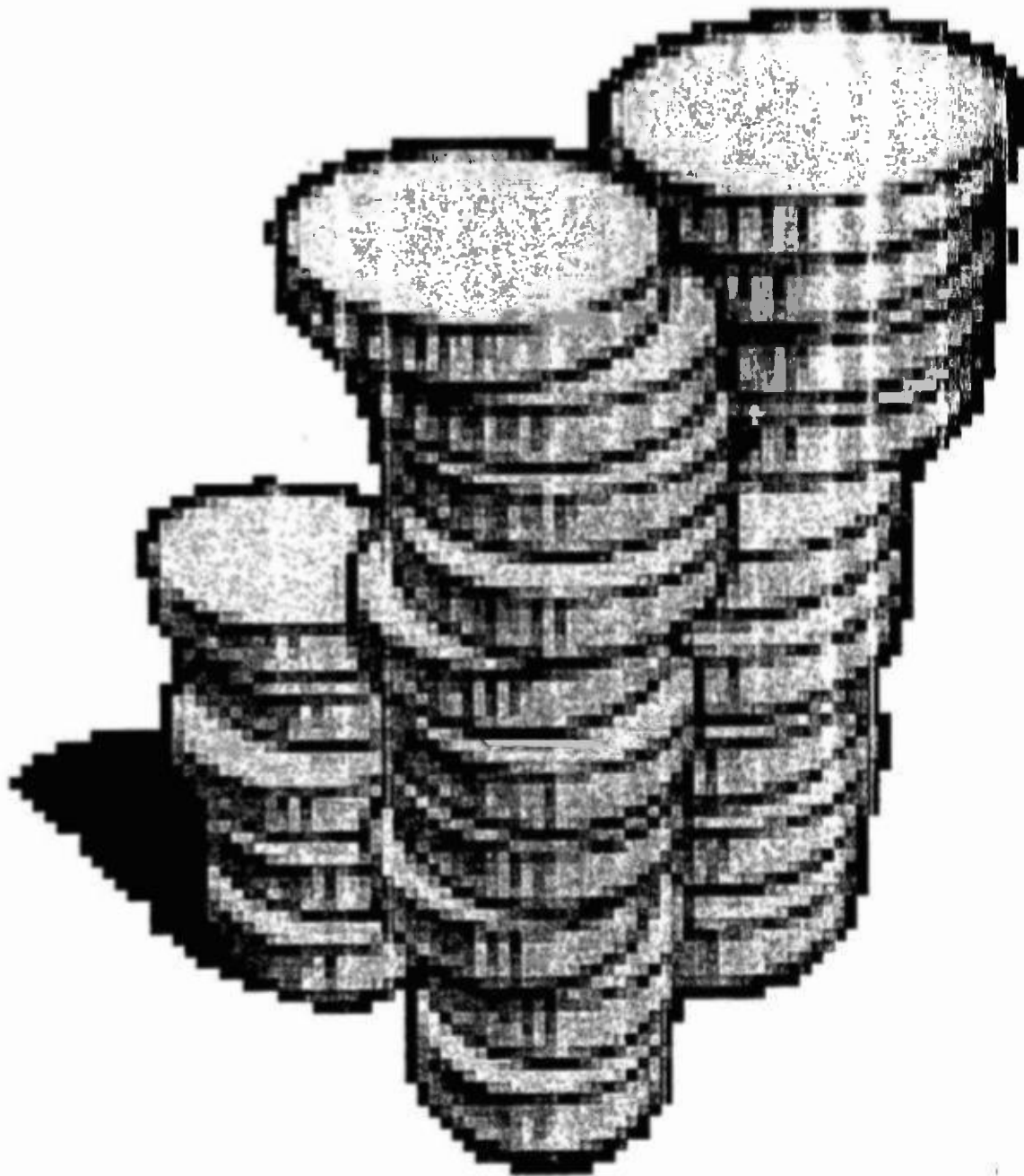
# PRESENT



# STEREO SYSTEM



# COINS



POSTER DISPLAYS  
USED DURING  
CLASS  
INSTRUCTIONS

**POSTER DISPLAYS  
USED DURING  
CLASS  
INSTRUCTIONS**













