

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF CULTURALLY AND NON CULTURALLY RELEVANT  
TEXTS ON ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION:  
CASE STUDIES OF TWO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
TEACHING PROGRAM AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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### Abstract

The present study aims mainly to investigate the impact that texts with cultural and non cultural relevant information have on the reading comprehension of two undergraduate learners of an English language teaching program at a Colombian public university. The two participants of this study went through a process of reading three culturally relevant texts (CRTs) and three non culturally relevant texts (NCRTs). They were assessed through some previous and post exercises along with some reading comprehension tests. Likewise, they were interviewed about some processes they applied when reading and they were asked about their impressions from the texts and the questionnaires. Data analysis showed that the participants' reading comprehension and attitudes were positively affected by the fact that they were familiar with the information presented in the CRTs. This study also generated some relevant insights about the importance of using reading strategies. Moreover, this research also showed ways to assess reading comprehension in a non traditional way and still get valid results.

## Resumen

Esta investigación se enfocó principalmente en explorar el impacto que tienen textos culturalmente familiares y no familiares en la comprensión de lectura de dos estudiantes adscritos a un programa de enseñanza del inglés en una universidad pública Colombiana. Estos dos participantes pasaron por un proceso de lectura de 3 textos culturalmente relevantes y 3 textos culturalmente no relevantes acompañados de un cuestionario de comprensión de lectura cada uno y un ejercicio oral previo y posterior a la lectura. Luego los participantes fueron entrevistados acerca de sus procesos de lectura y acerca de las impresiones que los textos y los cuestionarios les dejaron. Este análisis mostró que el hecho de que los textos incluyeran información culturalmente relevante influyó positivamente en la comprensión de lectura y en la actitud frente al ejercicio de lectura de los participantes. Esta investigación también generó algunos hallazgos relevantes acerca de la importancia de usar estrategias de lectura. A su vez, el análisis y los resultados de este estudio mostraron formas de evaluar la comprensión lectora de una manera no tradicional que generó una reflexión hacía una evaluación lectora alternativa.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This study sought to explore how Culturally Relevant Texts (CRTs) and non Culturally Relevant Texts (NCRTs) are related to reading comprehension in two undergraduate learners of an English language teaching program at a public university in Pereira-Colombia. Moreover, the use of reading strategies was analyzed along with the roles of vocabulary and text genres in the reading comprehension of the participants. This analysis also shed light on the topic of reading assessment. This study is structured in different sections:

The first section, statement of the problem, describes the impact that this study has on this region for English language teaching. Then the literature review exposes the theoretical foundations that are relevant and related to the current study, including different authors' ideas about reading comprehension, reading strategies, role of prior knowledge, vocabulary knowledge and text genre, as well as approaches about assessing reading comprehension. The next section introduces the research questions and objectives which guided the application and development of this study. Such questions are related to the issues presented in the literature review.

The methodology section gives some detailed insights about the context in which this study was carried out and the participants of the study who were two undergraduate learners of an English Language Teaching Program enrolled in an intermediate English course. In this section, the methods used to collect the data are introduced; namely, the reading sessions in which the participants went through a process of reading and answering some comprehension tests to evaluate comprehension in a quantitative way. Then, interviews were used to ask the participants about perceptions of the texts and their cognitive processes when reading, in order to know what they did to be able to deal with the texts and what reading strategies they used to support their reading process. During the development of the study we also inquired the participants about how



their background knowledge helped in understanding the CRTs and NCRTs. Based on their responses and our analysis, reading assessment processes were considered and explored. This section also includes the roles of the researchers in this process and the criteria for the selection of the texts that were implemented in the questionnaires. At the end of this section, it is explained how the process of data analysis was carried out in this study to generate the findings.

Subsequently, the findings that the data analysis produced are presented. These findings were divided into some categories that are explained in the data analysis section. Later, the discussion section deals with the relevant findings of this study contrasted or supported by theory and approaches that we considered were related to the content and purpose of our study. The findings of this study permitted to elaborate some pedagogical implications in the field of English teaching and to propose some implications that might enable further research on the topic of reading comprehension and reading assessment.

Finally, a general conclusion of the study is given followed by the list of references that were part of the theoretical foundations of this study. After this reference list, it can be found the appendixes section which contains the sample texts and questionnaires that were used during the reading sessions and interviews that were part of the data collection methods.

## 2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Learning a foreign language is a decisive step towards an individual's future. This choice entails major implications. Learning a foreign language is not just about knowing words; it is also about knowing culture and understanding how others see the world. Foreign language learners incorporate new worldviews into their experiences, different ways of thinking and operating. Corson (2001) argues that bilinguals greatly benefit from having the codes of two different languages in their brains which implies two views of the world. According to the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign languages (2006), bilinguals are seen as more conscious learners than others. Knowing a foreign language enhances the possibility to see the world from a privileged place. Being competent in another language is essential in a globalized world which demands to communicate better, open frontiers, understand other contexts and adapt knowledge. "Learning another language frees and broadens individual's minds, and enhances cognitive flexibility. The more languages people know, the more doors open. Consequently, the ability of understanding and being understood in the language of the worldwide context is necessary. Language and communication are the core of human experience. Therefore, a country should educate its citizens by providing them with enough opportunities to learn languages. In this way, people can be prepared both linguistically and culturally to function in a globalized world.

The Colombian government has proposed the Plan Nacional de Bilinguismo (PNB), which aims at establishing the appropriate conditions to enable students develop communicative competence in English. As an instrument to promote the PNB, the government has adopted the Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign languages (2006) published by MEN (Ministerio de

Educación Nacional), which have clarified the expectations of Basica and Media in terms of what needs to be achieved by 11 graders at an intermediate level of English.

In order to clarify the stages to be developed, the Common European Framework for Language Teaching and Evaluation proposes a scale of proficiency ranging from A1 to C2. The A1 level is the goal for grades 1 to 3; the A2 level is the goal for grades 4 to 7; the B1 is for grades 8 to 11. In each grade, certain standards are developed in order to reach the proposed levels; A1 aims at developing Beginning English level, A2 aims at a Basic English level and B1 aims at Pre-intermediate level. The rest of the scale is formed by B2 which is the level necessary for graduated students; the C1 is the level for the future teachers of English; and finally the C2 is the more advanced level. It should be mentioned that all levels contain competences such as the linguistic one, the pragmatic one and the sociolinguistic one which form the communicative competence that is the main skill which is expected to be achieved by students. Moreover, the standards have specific skills such as listening, reading, speaking and writing that are supposed to be developed through the implementation of the PNB.

Among the skills included in the standards, reading comprehension is one of the weakest, and it is even underdeveloped in the native language. Evidence of this is the low performance displayed by Colombian students in the “Pruebas de Estado” (ICFES 2006) when they were evaluated in the English area. More than 50% of the 11th grade students (the highest level in Colombian high schools) scored “average” and “poor”. This score demonstrated that students were able to comprehend the text globally which means a superficial comprehension of the text but did not achieve comprehension levels to make students think about the content of the texts, the writers’ intentions and the way the information is displayed.

In the same way, the reading competence is a vital component for all university students who have to read a lot during their university years in their mother tongue. However, their competence in reading is not adequate; as Cisneros (2004) reports “The insufficiency in the reading comprehension and in the writing of our university students has an influence in the poor academic level, being this characteristic one of the weakest elements of the majority of the students at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira.”(excerpt translated by authors). The weakness in reading comprehension in the first language is reflected also in the competence of reading in another language. Jiménez, García & Pearson (1995) state that it is likely that successful readers and writers in their L1 be also successful readers and writers in a second language.

Seen from one side, the deficiency in English reading comprehension of students in our context is evidenced; from the other, the types of texts implemented in reading exercises should also be considered, since they tend to be limited to the culture of the target language in its content. Ebe (2010) found in her study that it was not just a matter of her students being struggling readers; it was also that the texts used in reading practices needed deeper analysis, not only in linguistic aspects but in the content of the texts which readers were unable to relate to their background to understand what they were asked to read. English learning and teaching books used in our country do not often include contextualized topics and information related to the students’ and the country’s culture. Delanoy and Volkmann (2006) state that reading comprehension in EFL contexts might be enhanced by having readers exposed to texts that are related to their own prior experiences and knowledge.

For this reason, it is worth conducting a study to analyze the impact of the implementation of culturally relevant and non culturally relevant texts on students’ reading comprehension. The

purpose is to study how readers enrolled in a language teaching program relate their knowledge and experiences to texts that contain information that belongs to the readers' culture. As part of the study of reading comprehension that is intended to be explored, it is pertinent to consider an analysis of the strategies used by readers to comprehend CR and NCR texts and see what is the relationship between the strategies they implement and the cultural or non cultural characteristics of the texts. Moreover, as an initial stage to the reading of CR and NCRTs, this study was targeted at exploring a guided process of inferring and predicting information from the titles and images of the texts with the intention of knowing the impact of this particular exercise in reading comprehension. Since it is part of the reading process to check reader's performance to determine comprehension, assessment procedures are required to be analyzed in this study.

Considering the purposes stated here, the following are the research questions and objectives which guided the present study:

*Main question:*

- What is the impact of Culturally Relevant Texts (CRTs) and Non Culturally Relevant Texts (NCRTs) on the reading comprehension of 2 undergraduate learners of an English teaching program?

*Sub questions:*

- What is the role of reading strategies in the reading comprehension of CRTs and NCRTs of 2 undergraduate learners of an English teaching program?
- How do CRTs and NCRTs promote pre-ideas about the content of the text?
- What does the implementation of CRTs and NCRTs inform us about reading assessment?
- How are retelling exercises of CRTs and NCRTs related to reading comprehension and assessment?

Main objective:

- To explore the effects of the implementation of CRTs and NCRTs on reading comprehension practices.

Specific Objectives:

- To report the use of reading strategies when readers deal with CRTs and NCRTs.
- To uncover the role of predicting exercises before reading CRTs and NCRTs.
- To describe the impact of assessing reading comprehension when dealing with CRTs and NCRTs.
- To explore the use of retelling exercises and its relation with comprehension and assessment of CRTs and NCRTs.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *4.1 Reading Comprehension*

Reading is a complex but strategic process that requires effort on the part of the reader. Handsfield and Jiménez (2008) point out that in the context of literacy, reading is thinking. Moreover, Cox and Hopkins (2006) state that reading is a complex cognitive skill that requires the coordination of multiple processes in the brain. These authors also argue that reading behavior is a linguistic and a social process of interaction between the reader and the text where the reader intends to satisfy a purpose. In the same way, the context, the author's and the reader's intentions along with the reader's background knowledge and the reader's expectations from the text are involved in the reading process. These conceptions imply that reading is a complex developmental process that integrates a variety of components that intend to build fluent reading and comprehension.

From a constructivist point of view, reading comprehension refers to the construction of one's meaning while reading a written text. Klingner, Vaughn and Boardman (2007) argue that reading is a multi component, highly complex process that involves many interactions between readers and what they bring to the text. Ur (2003) points out that the construction of meaning that occurs in reading is a combination of two processes, on one side, decoding and understanding words, phrases and sentences in the text and on the other side, readers' expectations, previous knowledge, constructs of the text content and genre of the text. Similarly, Rosenblatt (1994) cited by Tracey and Morrow (2006) states that readers construct their own interpretations based on their existing schemas or personal background knowledge. These concepts suggest that reading

comprehension involves highly cognitive processes of the individuals complemented by their prior knowledge. Readers must be active participants in the process of reading, being able to guide and control their own mental processes with the aim of building a rich interpretation of written texts. In this sense, it is highly important the role of the information brought by the reader to help in constructing and generating meaning. Comprehension of texts deals with the capacity that each individual has to understand and construct meaning from the relevant ideas of written texts that are different in nature, assimilating, analyzing and interpreting the message contained in the text and also relating this message with existing ideas.

#### *4.2 Prior knowledge, Culture and Texts*

Experts often use the term schemata when discussing prior knowledge. It is important for readers to understand what they read. Readers must associate new information with the one that is already known. Poplin (1998) as cited by Macceca (2007) coined the term spiral knowledge, to show the relation between the new information learners encounter with the one they already have. Readers build a schema or mental representation of what they learn to organize their prior knowledge on a topic. A schema is an essential and large database in the brain that holds all of an individual's experiences and knowledge.

Students learn more effectively when they already know a little something about a topic and when the concepts involved in the topic mean something to them. Christen and Murphy (1991) state that research on enriching background knowledge has demonstrated that activating such knowledge increases comprehension. Linking new information to the students' prior or background knowledge activates students' interests. Macceca (2007) points out that students can



connect their personal lives and experiences effectively with the issues they are familiarized.

Using and building prior knowledge is essential to improve reading comprehension skills.

New information that cannot be tied to any prior knowledge is not learned well or at all. New information that is well integrated with prior knowledge is more deeply learned than new information that is only superficially integrated with prior knowledge. Therefore, in learning environments teachers must consider the information to which learners have been exposed and even most importantly what prior knowledge they have brought to the new learning experience because this affects the type of learning that takes place. If students do not read about their cultural groups' contributions or see pictures of people that represent their cultural backgrounds, they will likely feel alienated, and this will hinder their academic performance. According to DeVillar, Faltis, Cummins (1994) culturally sensitive texts aid students to develop positive cross cultural attitudes because texts are also intended to transmit values, norms, and attitudes.

Taking into account the importance of cultural sensitive texts, it is important to define the concept of culture in the reading comprehension process, Malloy and Malloy (1998) cited by Leonard and Guha (2002) states that culture is meaning that is shared by a group of people who hold common values and beliefs. Members of the group might have racial, ethnic, political, or community ties, which can be used as mechanisms to provide culturally relevant instruments for facilitating learning. Such cultural assets also draw on the history of students' lives, as well as their unique ways of communicating, behaving, and knowing. According to Diller (1999) the fact of not taking into account the multiplicity of traits that students bring to classroom may have poor

results in students' performance because there is not a connection around the common issues they share and the topics that teachers present in the classroom when dealing with reading activities.

Knowing the role of culture in literacy tasks, culturally relevant texts are those in which the characters, events, settings, and ways of talking and interacting are similar to the ways people talk and act and to the settings in students' communities. English learners comprehend culturally relevant texts better because of the link between their lives and what they read. This idea is supported by Garth and McCullough (2008) who state in their study in monolingual learners that a high level culturally-bound prior knowledge supports student's reading comprehension of culturally relevant texts despite their prior achievement level. Herrero (2006) conducted a study that concentrated on how teachers in Dominican Republic could organize literacy instruction using cultural literature, and it was found from this research that the implementation of this literature promoted participation, commitment and success in reading tasks. This shows how important cultural knowledge attachment is in the comprehension of text. For students reading in a new language is especially important that at least some of the texts be culturally relevant. The idea of the importance of culturally-bound texts aligns with Freeman and Freeman (2004) who argue that these types of texts are ones that students can connect with, ones that draw on their background and culture. Texts do this by connecting to readers' lives, not just to their cultural heritage. They draw from readers' experiences in their contexts such at home, community and at school and contribute to their process of making meaning. From the implementation of culturally relevant texts, Stuart and Volk (2002) found that the more these type of texts were incorporated, the more student's engagement increased.

### *4.3 Reading strategies*

In the process of reading, individuals use strategies for comprehension to take place. Duffy (2009) describes comprehension strategies as “before”, “as you begin”, “during” and “after”, stating that this is a helpful organizational structure for students because it emphasizes the ongoing continuous pursuit of meaning from before starting to read until well after the last page has been turned. This indicates a variety of possible strategies when reading. Jimenez, Garcia, and Pearson (1995) define reading comprehension strategies as an intentional attempt to clarify meaning when interacting with text. In the same sense, reading strategies are understood as conscious processes implemented by readers to facilitate deeper levels of understanding.

In understanding the use of reading strategies in a second language (L2) it is important to understand the role of the strategies implemented when reading in the mother tongue (L1); Jimenez (1997) points out the significance of the role of the strategies applied in the L2 from the L1, bringing to this study Jimenez Garcia and Pearson (1996) who found that successful bilingual readers understand the relationship between Spanish- and English-language literacy systems.

Students’ capability of transferring or applying their literacy knowledge and abilities from one language to the other is of particular importance. Studies have not only focused on strategies used by successful readers, but also on those used by non successful ones. Some studies have shed light on how non successful bilingual readers view their two languages as separate and unrelated, and they often see their non English language backgrounds as detrimental.

In his study, Jimenez (1997) highlighted some reading strategies that successful bilingual readers use and that they share with successful monolingual readers. Among these strategies there are included the making of inferences or drawing conclusions; integrating prior knowledge, information and experience into ongoing meaning construction; and asking questions when comprehension breaks down. These strategies provide low proficient bilingual readers with unique opportunities for improving their comprehension abilities.

Talking about some other reading strategies that can be implemented during reading, according to National Reading Panel (2000) cited by Zhang, Y. (2009), some of the most effective reading strategies used by readers are associating prior knowledge with the ideas in the text, guessing the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary based on context clues and summarizing. Iwai (2010) argues that successful reading is achieved through the construction of meaning with various approaches, such as using background knowledge, analyzing words, inferring the text, and identifying key vocabulary or information.

Pressley (2000) quoted by McNamara (2007) states that good readers use the rereading strategy to facilitate comprehension. This strategy consists in revisiting the text to check understanding or to confirm information that is required to complete a task. Pressley (2000) also argues that successful readers use this strategy to facilitate comprehension; on the contrary unskilled readers do not tend to make use of this strategy because they might be unaware about the possibilities that it offers.

#### *4.4 Predicting*

Before starting reading a text, proficient readers activate their prior knowledge along with reasoning skills to predict or infer information. Moreillon (2007) claims that the process of reading comprehension is positively influenced by having readers predicting and making inferences before, during and after they read. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) also support this idea stating that the implementation of the predicting strategy is a useful process that readers can implement for successful reading which involves using images and text to infer meaning. A reader can benefit from the initial image and title of a text to predict coming information of a story. Readers also take advantage of their background knowledge to be able to infer meaning. Therefore, it is important that images and titles are meaningful and representative for the reader. Carrasquillo, Kucer and Abrams (2004) point out that good readers in contrast to poor readers, use strategies before, during, and after reading making educated guesses, connections, and judgments in order to facilitate the meaning-making process. They also claim that making inferences and predictions require readers to count on the available information and on their own prior knowledge. Gunning (2010) states that for the predicting process to be successful, readers should use their prior knowledge to be able to assume what is likely to happen, and even more if the content of the text is familiar for them. Cultural familiar components in a text promote a closer previewing of the possible content of the texts that reflects a better performance during the reading process.

#### *4.5 Assessing Reading*

Reading assessment involves a process of gathering information to verify the reading development of a reader when interacting with a text. Mariotti and Homan (2005) suggest that the purpose of reading assessment lies in collecting information to estimate the levels of progress in reading comprehension. It is a multifaceted process that require ideally an analysis from different perspectives to get an ample vision of the process of reading. Caldwell (2008) argues that being reading a complex and versatile process; the manner to assess such process can not be left out only to a particular way of assessing. This author recognizes two categories of assessment measures: Formal and informal. Formal measures are instruments commercially prepared by publishers or institutions. Informal measures are more related to teaching practices that in turn have the characteristic of being extremely flexible and allow teachers design or modify their assessment procedures. Caldwell (2008) also states that formal assessing instruments are less authentic than informal measures where reading a passage and retelling its contents are similar to the actual task of reading and therefore more authentic than reading a text and answering multiple choice questions. Wolf (1993) also refers to formal and informal assessment stating that informal tests evidence reading comprehension in a more sensitive way; however, this type of measure is viewed as subjective and spontaneous.

In the assessment procedures, background knowledge is an important issue to consider, Alderson (2000) states the importance of background knowledge that should be understood as influencing in reading comprehension assessment, and therefore background knowledge needs to be taken into account in texts selection to facilitate performance in reading tests, rather than

allowing its absence to inhibit good performance. Ebe (2010) reflects on her study about the lack of texts used to assess reading comprehension that include cultural relevant information for readers; as a consequence students' performance was poor when they dealt with those texts that did not allow readers to bring their prior cultural knowledge to the texts. Goodman (1982) also argues that in her study, readers had higher levels of comprehension when texts were culturally relevant. This is why, culturally and non Culturally relevant texts might be analyzed on their implementation at the time of assessing reading comprehension.

#### *4.6 Retelling*

Oral retellings of texts is described as a valid means of assessment reading comprehension. Schumm (2006) describes retelling as an effective reading strategy which consists in open reports from what a reader remembers from a text and he affirms that they provide insights into reader's comprehension. Bos (1987) cited by Klingner, Vaughn, Boardman (2007) argues that retelling can be an effective practice for determining and assuring reading comprehension of texts. Moss (2004) characterizes retelling exercises as a way for students to show overall understanding of texts, as different from the fragmented responses expected in typical reading comprehension questionnaires. Retelling exercises imply a reconstruction of what the reader grasped from the text to reflect comprehension. This author also argues that retelling exercises promote readers to structure a personal interpretation of the text. Ebe (2010) also used retelling exercises in her study with culturally relevant texts, and she found that the participants' proficiency in the retelling exercise was higher when they were exposed to texts that were categorized as culturally relevant for them.

## 5. METHODOLOGY

### *5.1 Context*

This study was carried out at Universidad La Nueva Alianza (UNA) in Pereira Risaralda. The UNA is a public institution where people from different social and economic backgrounds attend. In 2004 Universidad La Nueva Alianza opened an English Language Teaching Program (ELTP). This program was created to fulfill the need prepare qualified English teachers to improve the English proficiency level of students in the region. According to the mission of Universidad la Nueva Alianza, the ELTP program intends to instruct professionals with an integral perspective for the exercise of teaching, investigation, and social projection. The ELTP program seeks to train Professional English teachers to enhance the instruction of English, the theoretical and practical knowledge of current English teaching methodologies, as well as the development of abilities, moral values and attitudes that qualify professionals to perform their teaching practices, with academic, pedagogic, investigative and humanistic competitiveness.

The ELTP program is a 5 year program; during these five years, students take an average of 5 subjects per semester which cover a variety of courses. Students take a sequence of English language courses from a basic course of English, followed by pre-intermediate and intermediate courses up to an advanced course. Once students have taken these courses, they take two advanced courses dealing with advanced grammar and academic writing. Also, there are content based subjects in English and Spanish such as pedagogy, developmental and educational psychology, anthropology of education, psycholinguistics, language acquisition, sociolinguistics and pragmatics among others.



## *5.2 Participants*

Two participants were selected for this study from the intermediate English course of the ELTP which is part of the third semester's syllabus. With the purpose of maintaining anonymity, the participants received pseudonyms: Arturo and Eliana. Arturo was 20 years old and Eliana was 21 years old. It is worth mentioning that these participants were selected at the beginning of the course and they had just completed a pre-intermediate course of English equivalent to A2 level. Students of the intermediate course took classes during seven hours per week where they continued their English learning process. The syllabi of all the English subjects of the ELTP are based on the competences proposed by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (2001).

Students at the intermediate level, after having taken the basic and pre-intermediate courses, were expected to start the course at B1 level of English language proficiency. This language English proficiency involves being able to initiate and participate in a simple conversation explaining ideas about personal and abstract issues in a coherent way. Students at B1 can write about their preferences and decisions using acceptable linguistic forms. Furthermore, students in B1 can comprehend texts of academic and general content, using appropriate reading strategies. Students in B1 level can identify certain cultural features of the language.

We chose the two participants based on preliminary observations during their English reading activities and on their teacher's criteria. Arturo was selected because he showed a good attitude and interest towards class activities in terms of reading exercises. In turn, Eliana was selected on the grounds that she seemed not to be very engaged in the reading activities proposed by the teacher. We selected these 2 participants who demonstrated differences in their level of

engagement and academic performance because we wanted to explore the process they went through when reading culturally and non culturally relevant texts to identify possible patterns in the two participants' reading comprehension processes. Along with these previous criteria, teacher's perceptions were crucial in the selection of the two participants. It was conducted an informal interview with the participants to make sure that they were suitable for our study in terms of availability and willingness.

### *5.3 Methods for data collection*

This study intended to explore the reading comprehension processes of two undergraduate students of an English language teaching program when they read CRTs (Cultural Relevant Texts) and NCRTs (Non Cultural Relevant Texts) in English. Three main methods for data collection were used in this study:

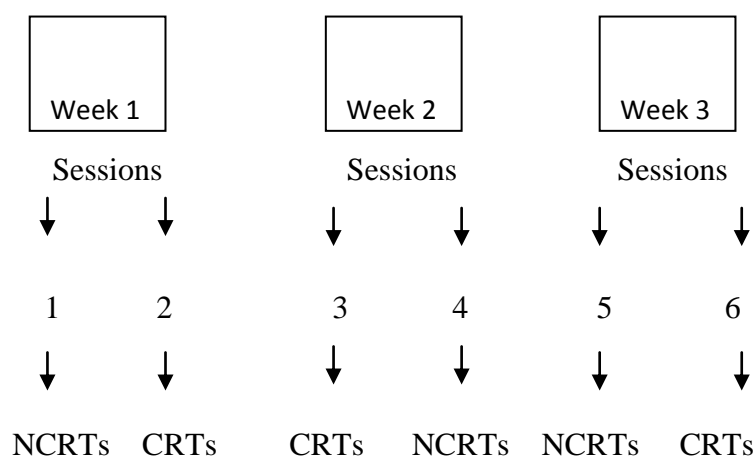
#### *5.3.1 Reading Sessions: Audio-recordings*

We conducted 6 reading sessions with each participant. In each session, the participant was provided with one type of text either culturally or non culturally relevant. It means that during the 6 sessions each participant read 3 culturally relevant texts and 3 non culturally relevant texts. Before each reading session, the participants were guided through an exercise of predicting and inferring information based on the images and titles of the texts with the intention of knowing how the participants interacted with the titles and the images of the CR and NCR texts. The participants were led through this exercise to assure the participant's perceptions. This interaction was audio-recorded. Then the participants were given the text along with a questionnaire

intended to assess their reading comprehension. After the participants finished reading and answering the questions, they were asked to give a short summary or retelling of the reading. Their responses were also audio-recorded.

Schedule for Reading Sessions:

Each session with the 2 participants, one after the other.



### 5.3.2 Interviews

After each reading session, we conducted interviews with the participants. These were semi structured interviews where researchers had some questions beforehand dealing with the participants' processes when reading (see annexes) but also researchers were flexible in terms of allowing participant's responses to generate some other questions which gave some other important insights for the development of the research.

### 5.3.3 Field notes

Each of the researchers kept a journal based on all of the reading sessions and interviews carried out with the participants. The intention was to have an evidence of the perceptions that

each researcher had throughout the research process, all this with the purpose of triangulating the information and validating results.

#### *5.4 Role of the researchers*

The researchers performed different roles throughout the study, observers, and interviewers. Two of the researchers conducted the reading sessions and interviews, the other one took field notes and audio-recorded the sessions. The researchers' roles were changed in every reading session. After each session, the 3 researchers reflected on the information collected and took notes of their impressions and comments on their journals.

#### *5.5 Culturally Relevant and Non Culturally Relevant Texts' Selection*

Culturally relevant texts (CRTs) were chosen because they contained information that according to the researchers was familiar for the participants as members of the Colombian culture; therefore, Colombian issues or themes such as holiday celebrations, popular myths and tourism was the content of these texts. On the other hand, the non-culturally relevant texts (NCRTs) dealt the same issues or themes but with the characteristics of places different from Colombia, it means foreign contexts, preferably far away from our context. Non-culturally relevant texts did not mean they were not meaningful for the participants. Customs and cultures from other contexts of the world might be meaningful for an individual. *(See annex 1, page 76)*

Since this material was implemented in its original state in the reading sessions, it is pertinent to mention that we did not pay much attention to the linguistic complexity within the texts. The

texts maintained certain accordance to what was expected from the participants to understand, but the researchers did not control every single detail in the content of the material.

### *5.6 Data Analysis*

After each reading session, the researchers completed their journal entries based on the data collected during the session. These journal entries were socialized and analyzed in group to find out commonalities that were relevant for the study. In this way, the different perspectives from researchers were triangulated at this point of the analysis. These entries were transcribed and listed in a collective journal.

The audio-recordings of the reading sessions and interviews with the two participants were transcribed and sorted by relevant topics. As a convention it was established that “P” would refer to the participants’ comments and “R” to the researchers’ interventions. This information was analyzed taking into consideration the following categories: Impact of cultural knowledge in reading comprehension; reading strategies used by the participants when reading CRTs and NCRTs; inferring and predicting information before reading CRTs and NCRTs; reading assessment; and retelling as a sample of comprehension.

Later, these categories guided the identification and selection of the most relevant findings included in this study. These initial findings were supported by the entries taken from the collective journal and the results of the analysis from the reading comprehension questionnaires. From this point, the researchers established commonalities that allowed to produce the findings of this study.

## 6. FINDINGS

The following section portrays the most relevant findings that the analysis of the data produced in order to give answer to the questions and objectives that guided this study.

### *6.1 Cultural knowledge had different roles in the participants' reading comprehension when reading CRT and NCRT.*

These findings intend to describe the influence of the acquaintance with the information dealt with in the text as a factor in the participants' reading comprehension of the NCRTs and CRTs.

#### *6.1.1 Doubtful influence of cultural knowledge of the text in Arturo's reading process.*

The following excerpts depict Arturo's impressions about the role of his cultural familiarity in reading comprehension. The samples belong to the post interviews of the first CRT and NCRT about Christmas in Colombia and in Iran called "Colombian night of peace" and "The east at the end of the year".

#### *NCRT*

*P: Pues me pareció genial, muy divertido, la verdad...  
...me pareció muy informativo, que expresa mucho conocimiento de la cultura pues a comparación de otros, que uno no lee muchos textos que tengan que ver relacionados con otro país...*

#### *CRT*

*P: Me pareció divertido porque habla no sé, de algo que es de uno, de lo que uno pertenece, y pues lo mas importante es que habla mucho de las culturas, a mi me encantan los textos culturales porque nosotros necesitamos conocer mucho las culturas del mundo, me parecen muy interesantes esos textos porque usted además que aprende inglés, aprende vocabulario...*

In both texts the participant manifested his desire of learning and exploring about unfamiliar topics to enrich his knowledge in terms of cultural aspects. This is how he highlighted the importance of learning the language through materials related to different cultures around the world.

During the same post interview of the first NCRT “The east at the end of the year” when being asked about something memorable from the text the participant stated what follows:

*P: No pues los rituales que ellos hacen, lo de Little feast and Little fast, me pareció muy interesante porque aprendí mucho de eso.*

In spite of the participant’s unfamiliarity with the content of the text, he found it engaging, giving as a result, a probable better understanding of the text, evidenced in the results of the tests. It can be said at this stage that Arturo was motivated by both kinds of texts even if the content of the text was NCR. Additionally, Arturo’s positive attitude towards the texts, whether CR or NCR, had a significant influence in the process of understanding it.

This is an excerpt of some responses produced by Arturo related to background knowledge during the pre-interview to the reading of the first NCRT about Christmas in Iran.

*R: En cuanto a costumbres de fin de año, en navidad, ¿sabes algo acerca de eso?*

*P: Me imagino que debe ser algo muy santo, muy religioso, pues por las, como se dice, cuando la gente ora, no no recuerdo, algo muy espiritual...*

*R: ¿Qué más conoces acerca de Irán?*

*P: Conozco mas que todo los conflictos que ha habido entre ese país y otros países, y en cuanto a la religión que es mucho mas diferente a la de nosotros, el islamismo, o el musulmán no sé, ellos tienen su propia Biblia, y en cuanto a conflictos...*

The participant gives information regarding different aspects of the referred country; it is particularly important that he mentioned some attributes of the celebrations and customs carried out in this country, even though the information provided was not very profound, probably due to the fact that this kind of information is not commonly known by the average Colombian youngster. In other words, despite the fact that the reader was not that well informed about Christmas in Iran, he demonstrated some knowledge related to different issues about Iran. His background might have helped in the comprehension of the text.

The two following excerpts belong to the pre-interviews of the second round of CRT and NCRT about the Chinese and Colombian tales where the participant was asked about background knowledge of the topics of the texts.

*NCRT*

*R: Exactamente es un cuento del oriente, probablemente de la china o del Japón que se llama así: Serpent Pursuing an antidote ¿Sabes algo acerca de este mito, de esta leyenda?*

*P: Jah para nada.*

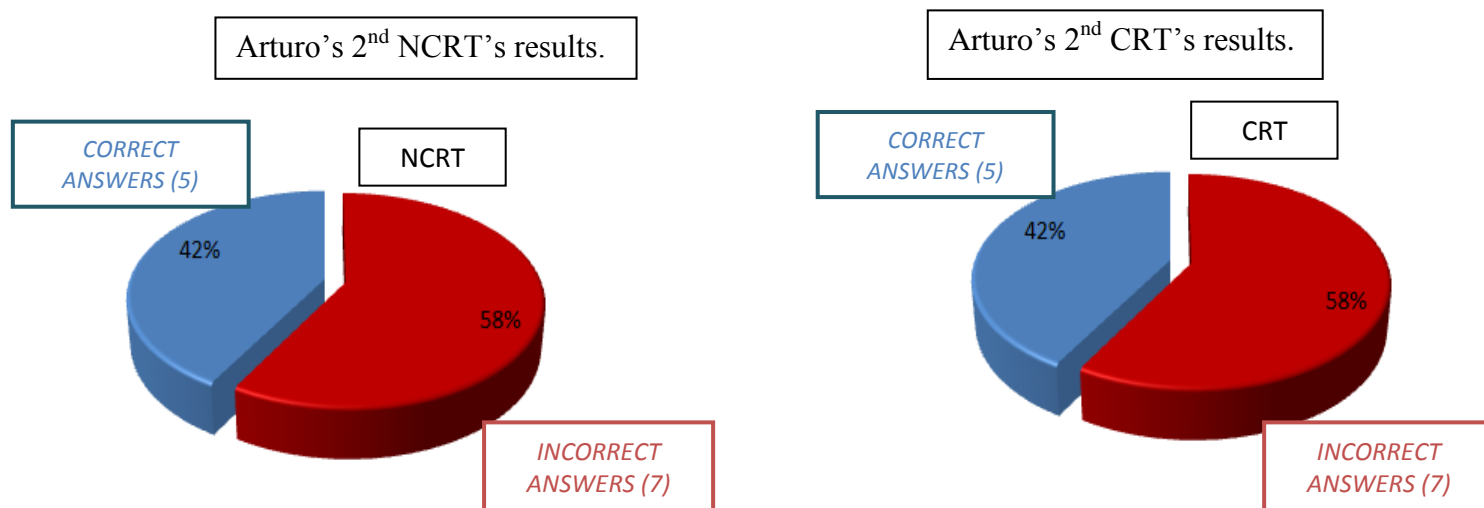
*CRT*

*R: Sí exactamente, de eso se trata, de la llorona “the wandering weeping woman” O.K ¿Qué sabes de la llorona?*

*P: Ay no es que eso tienen un poco de historias yo no sé. Unos dicen que aparece junto a los ríos y que porque el niño se le murió y que ¿Donde está mi hijo? Entonces y que bueno y que escucha bueno y que los pescadores que cuando ya están allá pescando por la noche que escuchan a esa señora disque llore llore y llore mi hijo mi hijo mi hijo y ya eso es lo que yo he escuchado.*

In the case of the CRT, it was expected that the participant showed some background knowledge related to the content of the text and, evidently, the participant managed to mention some useful ideas linked to the information contained in the text. On the contrary, the NCRT did not evoke any background knowledge.

However, the following graphs show that the unfamiliarity with the NCRT in relation to the CRT did not seem to have been significant at the time of answering the questionnaires since he got the same number of correct answers.





Arturo got similar results in both types of texts during the three reading sessions. Based on Arturo's previous comments about the interest that the texts evoked, it can be said that he found both texts appealing because of their cultural components no matter if it was relevant or not. The low results might have been due to other factors such as vocabulary and linguistic complexity or due to the kind of questions asked in the texts.

From the previous evidence it can be said that the cultural relevance of the text was not a significant factor in his reading performance; he seemed to be motivated by the cultural topics presented in the texts.

Arturo showed interest for the CRTs and NCRTs in all the reading sessions. He found both kinds of texts approachable. Based on his results of the tests in which he got the same number of correct answers, it can be said that his performance is not entirely linked to the familiarity or unfamiliarity with the content of the texts. That is, Arturo's results in the tests were not very high which indicated that not only the familiarity or unfamiliarity with the texts determined his comprehension but the complexity of the text and the types of questions included in the tests.

#### *6.1.2 Significant influence of cultural knowledge in Eliana's reading process.*

In two different reading sessions the participant was exposed to the first CRT "Colombian Night of peace" and the NCRT "The east at the end of the year". The following excerpts from the post interviews evidence the participant's positive opinion about the role of his background knowledge in the process of comprehending those texts.

*NCRT*

*R: ¿Qué tipo de efecto en su comprensión cree que tuvo el hecho de que el texto contuviera información ajena a las costumbres que usted conoce de la navidad?*

*P: Ahh si, pues yo pienso que hubiera sido mucho más fácil si hubiera tenido algún tipo de conocimiento acerca de ese país, tal vez hubiera relacionado muchas mas cosas con la lectura.*

*CRT*

*R: Bueno, tú mencionaste algo del conocimiento que tenías antes de leer el texto. ¿Crees que es importante o no para poder entender el texto y responder las preguntas?*

*P: Claro, al yo saber algo acerca de la navidad en Colombia, se me hizo más fácil entender el texto. Sin embargo el texto lo lleva a uno a contestar las preguntas; pero claro debe ser porque yo conozco muchas de las costumbres de la navidad en nuestro país.*

In the case of the NCRT, the text dealt with the topic of Christmas, which is common for a regular Colombian person; nevertheless the content of the text dealt with Christmas customs in Iran, that's why the participant stated that she was unfamiliar with the text, and this did not facilitate comprehension. However, when she was asked about the role of the cultural load in the CRT, the participant recognized this element as influential in order to be able to understand better the text.

This is an excerpt from a post interview after the reading of the first CRT about Christmas in Colombia where the participant was asked about her perceptions from this text in comparison with the first NCRT about Christmas in Iran.

*P: Pues la verdad, el otro me pareció más complicado.*

*R: Complicado ¿Por qué?*

*P: Pues porque no estaba enterada de nada, era todo nuevo. Éste me pareció más fácil, entonces en diferencias como que éste está estructurado de una manera, pues yo lo veo así, tal vez por el conocimiento previo que tenía, pues de una manera más fácil.*

The participant stated her opinion about the complexity of the texts and related it particularly to prior knowledge, stating clearly that she found the NCRT less approachable.

The following excerpts portray the participant's responses when being asked about her perceptions about the reading of the first CRT called Christmas in Colombia (Colombian night of peace).

*CRT*

*P: No pues, es como basado en que ya se saben las cosas de antes, ya sabía más o menos las cosas del texto, entonces fue muy fácil. En algunas partes yo volví a leer pero no en todo el texto solamente en algunas partecitas en donde no entendía algo...*

Eliana's cultural familiarity with the text seemed to have helped her in the process of approaching the text. She did not have to make a big effort to understand in a general way the content of the text.

The following journal entry shows some characteristics observed during the reading sessions of the CRTs.

*Journal entry 09: We can notice how the fact that the cultural familiarity with the content of the text makes the reading more pleasant, appealing and easier for the participant to understand. Less complains and frowns were observed during the reading of these texts.*

This entry evidences the subtle effect that the cultural familiarity with the content of the texts had on Eliana's reading process. The fact that the texts were related to her cultural background arose more interest in the reading than when reading the NCRTs.

The following excerpts belong to the post interviews of the second round of NCRT and CRT about the Chinese tale (Serpent pursuing an antidote) and the Colombian tale (The wandering weeping woman) where Eliana expressed her perceptions after reading the texts.

*¿Puedes decirnos como te sentiste leyendo el texto?*

*NCRT*

*P: Qué cosa tan terrible, eso es muy complicado no entendí. No sé si entendí bien o entendí mal, me sentí frustrada.*

*R: ¿Por qué?*

*P: Por que estaba muy difícil, no entendía palabras, yo no sé, si es porque es oriental o porque son leyendas por allá que uno nunca se imagina, entonces es por eso, entonces me sentí mal.*

*R: ¿Qué factor crees que fue el que más influyó?*

*P: El vocabulario claro, pues eso fue lo que tuvo que influir en todo y pues que no conozco nada del texto, entonces...*

*CRT*

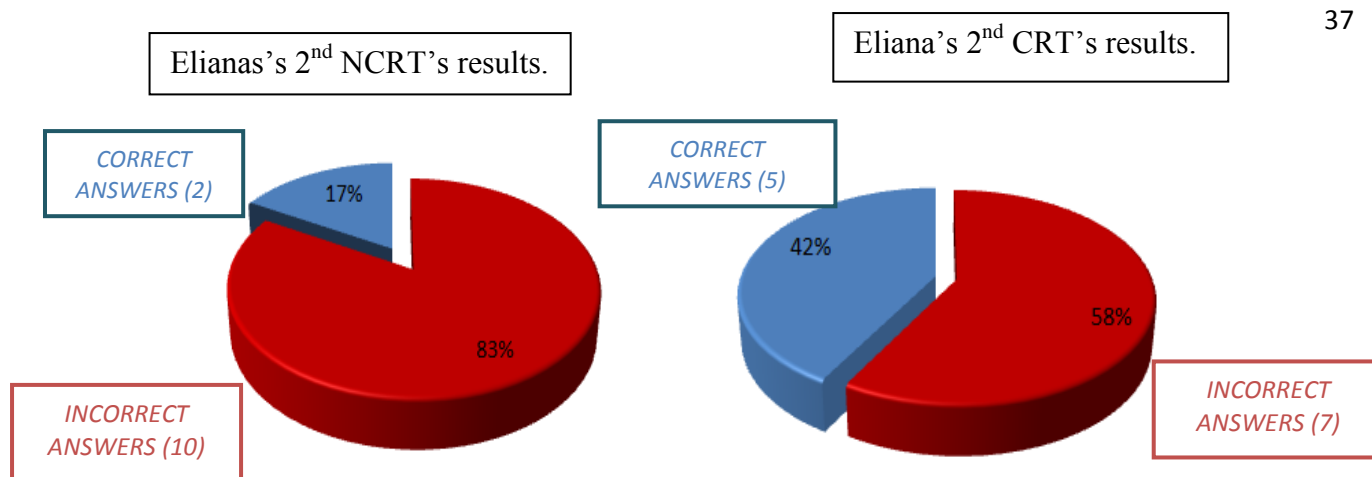
*P: Pues un poquito confundida porque no entendía unas cosas, porque el vocabulario era desconocido pues por el contexto por la forma del texto, pues por esas cuestiones de que leyendas y eso toman partes de cosas desconocidas y pues sí en todo en conclusión me quedaron algunos huequitos pues que no entendí en total la lectura.*

In the case of the non culturally relevant text, the participant manifested her inconformity with this text, due to the great amount of unknown vocabulary and the unfamiliarity with the content of the text; these aspects led the participant to feel disappointed and frustrated about the text.

In the case of the culturally relevant text, the participant expressed something similar to the NCRT, but in a lesser extent; saying that this text included also a lot of unknown vocabulary and slightly different information than she expected in the content of the text.

Although the CRT presented some unknown information for the participant related to the content, she felt more sympathetic or more connected with this text than with the NCRT and her performance was significantly better in the CRT (42% correct answers) then in the NCRT she got lower results (17% correct answers). This could be due to her partial familiarity with the content of the text.

The following graphs portray the results that Eliana obtained in the questionnaires related to the second round of NCRT and CRT about the Colombian and Chinese tales.



These results show how the fact that Eliana was acquainted with the CRT may have influenced the number of correct answers she got. Although the results were not very high, they show that there was a better performance with the CRT. This is also evidenced in the results that Eliana obtained when dealing with all the questionnaires of all the NCR texts, in which she got 10 correct answers out of 35. On the other hand, she obtained 17 correct answers out of 34 when dealing with the CRTs. Eliana's overall performance when reading CRTs was similar to Arturo's, the other participant, that had been chosen due to his positive attitude and performance at reading. This fact provides strong evidence of the significance of Cultural familiarity in Eliana's case. Moreover, when the participant was led to the retelling exercise, she performed better when expressing her ideas about the CRTs than when dealing with the NCRTs.

The following excerpt belongs to a question from the test about the first CRT about Christmas in Colombia called "Colombian night of peace".

- 4) The term Christmas Eve makes reference to:
- December 16<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - December 24<sup>th</sup>.
  - December 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - The whole December month

The participant did not seem to have used her background knowledge, even though she might not have known the term "eve", she could have made some inferences from the text itself and

then from some background information about the days of the “novenas”. This may suggest that the participant lacked strategies to infer the meaning of a word and that even though she had some background knowledge about the topic, it was not enough to answer correctly this specific question.

## *6.2 The use of reading strategies influenced the participant’s reading comprehension of CRTs and NCRTs.*

This section intends to show how reading strategies impacted the participants’ performance when reading the CRTs and NCRTs.

### *6.2.1 Arturo’s use of reading strategies when reading CRTs and NCRTs*

The participant was asked about what strategies or processes he used during the reading of the texts. The following excerpts show his responses gathered from the interviews of the first round of texts about Christmas in Colombia “Colombian night of peace” (CRT) and Christmas in Iran “The east at the end of the year” (NCRT).

#### *NCRT*

*R: Aparte de lo que ya nos mencionaste, que cosas hiciste, ¿Qué mecanismos usaste para leer y entender el texto?*

*P: ...pues la primera leída como qué entendí como el tema central, la segunda leída lo analicé un poquito más detenidamente, pero quedé en las mismas. La tercera vez si ya analicé mas el tema, tomé apuntes ahí mismo en la hojita, esto que significaba, rayarla, que esto donde viene, conectar oraciones que comenzaron en un párrafo y terminaron, tratar de conectarlas, eee, profundizar leer, leer, o sea leer detenidamente cada frase...*

#### *CRT*

*R: ¿tu que haces cuando lees, tu procedimiento cual es?*

*P: ...yo leo y leo y releo y muchas veces uno lee tanto que se confunde, si me entiende, o sea el procedimiento es primero todo el texto, luego una leídita así rápida, chequeando, si lo entendí, luego voy párrafo por párrafo sacando la idea principal de cada párrafo, la saco aparte bueno...después de que tenga la idea de cada párrafo, de cada parte del texto, voy a las preguntas, miro la pregunta y ya sé mas o menos en que parte del párrafo entonces me concentro más en ese párrafo.*

The participant used a reading strategy that consists of rereading the text as many times as needed where the text gradually becomes more understandable by reading past and unclear portions of the text. It seems that the participant was aware of his process, evaluating and making adjustments, developing more solid interpretations. Other strategies that Arturo used were to take some notes about the reading, get the main ideas from each paragraph of the text and connect ideas from different paragraphs.

The participant's use of these strategies might have provided him with elements to understand the text. However, at the time of answering the questionnaires, it is not evident if these behaviors contributed to have a good performance in the tests. The score for the NCRT in this questionnaire was 8 correct answers out of 11, and for the CRT the participant obtained 7 correct answers out of 10. These results might indicate the positive influence that these reading strategies might have had in Arturo's performance; however, the results of the other questionnaires related to the second and third round of texts were lower. The lower results might be attributed to the kinds of questions included in the questionnaires which might have been more confusing than the questions included in the first round of texts. On the other hand, Arturo's good results in the retelling exercises were consistent in all the reading sessions which might indicate the helpfulness of these reading behaviors at the time of showing general understanding of the texts. Or it may suggest that this participant is good at getting meaning out of text (gist) but not so much at specific information.

The following excerpts belong to the post interviews of the NCRTs and CRTs of the second round related to the Chinese and Colombian tales (Serpent pursuing an antidote and Wandering weeping woman).

*NCRT*

*R: Bueno y en cuanto al vocabulario...*

*P: Noo, mucho vocabulario que yo no conozco.*

*R: ¿Y que hiciste cuando te enfrentaste a esto?*

*P: No pues... ¿Qué hice? No... Siempre contextualizar, eso es lo que uno hace y continuar con la lectura porque si uno se queda ahí pues no... continuar, continuar... a ver si de pronto lo que uno pensó si es acorde a la lectura...*

*CRT*

*R: ¿Cuando leías el texto y encontrabas palabras desconocidas que hacías?*

*P: Las contextualizaba, pues si uno no entiende una palabra entonces uno se va a la anterior y a la anterior ah bueno yo creo que esto significa esto y esto.*

*R: ¿Y esto que escribiste aquí a los lados de los párrafos qué es?*

*P: Es lo que siempre escribo. No eso es como que una síntesis para yo guiarme.*

In relation to his approach towards the unknown vocabulary, the participant implemented the reading strategy of getting meaning out of the text, based on multiple interpretations of known portions of the texts to contribute to build new meanings. However, if the process of contextualization did not work, the participant did not stop the process of reading and continued reading to get a general idea of the whole text. Moreover; the participant's motivation is evident in the process of reading since he is committed to accomplish his objective as reader towards the given text. In this case, the participant dealt with the CRT and NCRT with the same determination and attitude which was also evidenced in the excerpts of the first round of the texts. This attitude led the participant to always try to employ the type of strategies already mentioned to deal with the CRTs and NCRTs.

The following journal entry exposes another reading strategy used by Arturo when reading.

*Journal entry 4: During the reading sessions we have noticed that Arturo takes a lot of notes related to the text he is reading. The participant seems to have an interaction with the text because as he reads he takes something out of each paragraph. Later, when he is answering the questionnaire he goes back to his notes probably to know where the information might be. In a post interview, Arturo stated that this behaviour of taking notes is a process he usually follows in order to get the main idea of each paragraph of the text.*



The reader showed a high proficient reading strategy which consists on getting a general idea of each of the paragraphs of the text, with the intention of locating information that he might need later for answering the questions and retelling the texts.

### 6.2.2 Eliana's use of reading strategies when reading the CRTs and NCRTs

The participant was asked about what strategies or processes she implemented during the reading of the texts. The following excerpts show her responses gathered from the interview of the first NCRT about Christmas in Iran called "The east at the end of the year".

*NCRT*

*R: Ok. ¿Cómo nos explicarías el proceso de lectura que tuviste, usaste alguna estrategia para entender el texto, algún método que tú conozcas?*

*P: Releí porque no entendía mucho. Y había algunas partes en las que no entendía. Entonces leí, leí y seguía sin entender.*

*R: ¿Y releer es leer todo el texto o releer sólo las partes que no entendías?*

*P: Sólo las partes que no entendía.*

*R: Ok. ¿Otras estrategias?*

*P: Mmm..... no. Lo que subrayé fue algo que me pareció importante.*

Eliana implemented the same reading strategy used by Arturo, which consisted of reading the text several times. Eliana highlighted some portions of the text that were important for her. Despite of the fact that this participant read several times, highlighted the unknown words, these behaviors did not seem to have contributed to the comprehension of the text. She considered highlighting unknown words as a strategy; which might imply that she was not very well informed about reading strategies and their use.

In the case of the NCRT the participant did not get good results even though he used the same strategy of re reading, probably the low results are due to her lack of background knowledge.

Given that the participant applied just some incomplete strategies, this could have affected her performance in the questionnaires related to NCRT and CRTs. However, the scores for the NCRT were 3 correct answers out of 11, different from the CRT in which the participant obtained 6 correct answers out of 10. There is not evidence which demonstrated that good results in the CRT were caused by the use of reading strategies.

The following excerpt belongs to an entry from the researchers' journal after the reading of the first round of texts about Christmas in Colombia and Christmas in Iran.

*Journal entry 5: During the first reading session, Eliana asked several times for the meaning of some words that were unknown for her. This behavior was repetitive at the beginning until we told her not to do it.*

The participant did not seem to move ahead when encountering unknown vocabulary; she just asked to the researchers for the meaning of those words. This behavior evidenced a break down in the flow of reading; therefore, Eliana's comprehension might have been affected by the repetitive pauses she made provoked by the unknown vocabulary she encountered in the text.

The following excerpts belong to the post interviews of the second round of NCRTs and CRTs related to the Chinese and Colombian tales, where the participant talks about reading strategies used during the reading of the texts.

*NCRT*

*R: ¿Y qué hacías cuando enfrentabas ese vocabulario desconocido?*

*P: Leí, leí pero no entendí*

*R: ¿Y otras estrategias?*

*P: Ehh... buscaba en el texto a ver si podía encontrar lo que no entendía y tampoco.*

*CRT*

*R: ¿Qué hacías cuando enfrentabas vocabulario desconocido?*

*P: Pues algunos me los daba el texto entonces intentaba mirar bien pues lo que había y ya los buscaba. Y Los otros pues releí y releí y sin embargo pues quedé sin entender algunos pero pues no eran tan relevantes, pues pienso yo.*

The participant tried to implement a procedure of getting the meaning of unknown words using the context around them; however, according to her, this strategy was not completely helpful to fully understand the vocabulary. The participant gave much more importance to the procedure of rereading the text where unknown words were presented. In this case it happened something similar to the reading of the first round of NCRTs and CRTs related Christmas in Iran and Christmas in Colombia. The reading strategy of re-reading apparently was not effective.

### *6.2.3 Arturo and Eliana's use of reading strategies when reading CRT and NCRT*

Arturo and Eliana implemented the same reading strategy of rereading the texts when dealing with CRTs and NCRTs. This strategy was used with different purposes; Arturo's intention was to go back to the text to clarify and consolidate meaning by reading the texts several times. Eliana reread portions of the text each time she encountered something that was unclear for her. Therefore, Arturo was able to approach the texts in a general way to later be able to understand specific parts of the texts, but Eliana apparently focused on clarifying specific parts of the texts in which she encountered difficulties to understand vocabulary that was challenging for her; this behavior produced that Eliana disrupted her flow of reading preventing her from getting general understanding of the texts.

Arturo implemented some strategies such as taking notes, getting main ideas out of each paragraph and getting meaning of words out of the context when reading the CRTs and NCRTs. Some strategies the Eliana used were highlighting important portions of the text and as Arturo did, getting meaning out of the text. The types of strategies that the participants used denote that Arturo was more connected with his process of trying to approach the texts than Eliana. It can be

said that based on the results obtained by the participants in the questionnaires of the NCRTs and CRTs , the implementation of reading strategies might have helped the participants to get better results. In all of the questionnaires, Arturo obtained 37 correct answers and Eliana 27 correct answers out of 69 questions. The fact that Arturo obtained better results can not be directly attributed to the good implementation of reading strategies but it might have influenced on answering some of the questions. However, in the retelling exercises, Arturo always demonstrated to have understood the better texts than Eliana. This can denote Arturo's better use of strategies to get the general ideas of the texts. In the case of Eliana, she demonstrated to have understood better the texts that were CR. It is not possible to say that in the case of the CRT, Eliana implemented reading strategies better than with the NCRT. This better performance can be attributed to the cultural familiarity with the texts which will be expanded later in a different finding.

Regarding the texts' cultural attributes, both participants seemed to have followed the same processes when implementing reading strategies dealing with CRTs and NCRTs; it was not possible to state whether the characteristics of the texts influenced in the implementation of the reading strategies previously mentioned.

### 6.3 Led implementation of predicting strategy as an activating and engaging exercise previous to the reading of NCRTs and CRTs.

Before starting the reading sessions, as a first stage, the participants were asked to infer something from the titles and the images of the texts. The following samples show the processes that the participants went through when they were led to infer from the titles and images of the CR and NCR texts.

#### 6.3.1 Processes carried out by Arturo when reading the NCRTs and CRTs.

Before starting the two reading sessions dealing with Christmas in Iran and in Colombia, Arturo was led to a process of inference from the title and the image of the text. The following excerpts show the participant's production at this stage. (For all of the excerpts taken from interviews "R" stands for Researcher and "P" participant).

NCRT	CRT
<i>R: ¿Qué puedes inferir de este título, y de esta imagen que acompaña al título?</i>	<i>R: ¿Este es el título de la lectura: "Colombian night of peace". ¿Qué crees tú o qué infieres tú desde este título?</i>
<i>P: A ver, pues yo pienso que el texto se va a referir como qué cosas hacen cuando se va a finalizar el año en el oriente, en, ya sea en la India, en Irán...</i>	<i>P: Que es navidad.</i>
<i>R: ¿Y que opinas de la imagen?</i>	<i>R: ¿Por qué?</i>
<i>P: Pues eso es como que, como una ciudad del medio oriente, de por allá,</i>	<i>P: Porque principalmente Noche de Paz es cuando es la época de diciembre, cuando uno disfruta con su familia o sus amigos...</i>
<i>R: ¿y por qué infieres eso?</i>	<i>R: ¿Qué te dice la imagen?</i>
<i>P: Pues uno se guía por el título, porque ahí dice, el este al fin del año</i>	<i>P: Hay estrellitas, los árboles. Eso representa como el alumbrado, la Navidad. Porque es el mes donde empiezan los faroles o el alumbrado...</i>

In the case of the NCRT, Arturo was able to relate what he knew with the meaning of the title of the text, including possible ideas to be developed throughout the text. In this case the

knowledge of the vocabulary of the text helped Arturo to infer and predict what the text was going to be about.

In comparison to the NCRT, Arturo seemed to be much more acquainted with the CRT; because in the case of this text, he was able to infer more information out of the title and the image. The participant managed to interpret the title of the text, inferring from it the gist of the content. Thus, he was able to relate his interpretation of the title with the probable content of the text which was more accurate than with the NCRT.

It is noticeable the amount of information that the participant provided, which revealed high and precise knowledge about the topic. This fact evidenced the familiarity that the participant possessed with the content of the text.

The following excerpts depict the induced process of inference carried out by Arturo before reading the second round texts about a Chinese and a Colombian tales.

NCRT	CRT
<p><i>P: Sí, entonces la serpiente persigue un antídoto. Ay cómo así... no ese...ese titulo está muy raro. Bueno yo digo que es una historia de una serpiente. (Murmillos...) persiguiendo un antídoto. Mira tan raro sabiendo que...que es algo como contradictorio porque si ella bota veneno está buscando como un antídoto</i></p> <p><i>R: ¿Pero que tal el lugar o de donde puede provenir?</i></p> <p><i>P: Ah no pues eso por allá de la china o ¿De donde es eso?</i></p> <p><i>R: ¿Por qué lo dices?</i></p> <p><i>P: Porque ese muñequito como está vestido así con la colita. Sí eso es de por allá del oriente.</i></p>	<p><i>R: ¿Qué puedes inferir acerca del titulo?</i></p> <p><i>P: ...que es como una leyenda o un mito... acerca de lo que sucede en el bosque.</i></p> <p><i>R: ¿Por qué crees que es una leyenda o un mito?</i></p> <p><i>P: Pues por la imagen como tan metafórica...</i></p> <p><i>R: ¿Y qué hay del título?</i></p> <p><i>P: ... la verdad no sé lo único que puedo conectar es eso pero sí las 2 palabras "wandering" "weeping" no sé.</i></p> <p><i>R: Bueno, Viendo la imagen, ¿qué podrías inferir de allí...?</i></p> <p><i>P: Que es una mujer...una leyenda....bueno entonces yo digo que de pronto que una mujer que se lamenta...</i></p>

The inference from the NCRT evidences that in spite of Arturo's lack of background information, he tried to infer the origin of the story based on the image he observed in the text.

The picture allowed Arturo to recognize that it was a Chinese story. The title of the text linked with the interpretation of the image facilitated the participant to construct his own interpretation of the content of the text, which in general terms was accurate.

Arturo was able to question the title of the text, because he found that the title “A serpent pursuing an antidote” did not make sense; consequently he reported that the title was contradictory and confusing. Arturo’s comments might indicate that he was reflecting upon the information he was exposed to, he did not take for granted that what the title said was true. The participant tried to make sense of what he read which may evidence that Arturo was applying an important reading strategy that goes beyond inferring information.

In the case of the CRT, two words from the title were unknown for the participant; however, this fact did not hinder him to produce some ideas about what might be the content of the text; the participant also based his ideas on the image which helped him to produce more thoughts, predicting about a story of a woman who wanders and makes some sounds.

In spite of the unknown vocabulary presented in the title of the text, it can be said that the idea of “La llorona”, which was accurate, came from his previous knowledge due to the fact that this tale is popularly known for a regular Colombian person and as a Spanish speaker. On the other hand, when the participant was led to infer something from the NCRT’s title and image, he took advantage of the fact that he was aware of the vocabulary presented in the text. Therefore, it can be said that Arturo made use of his prior knowledge and vocabulary to anticipate the content of the text. This could also be due to a more descriptive, complete and interesting image provided by the NCRT.

### 6.3.2 Processes carried out by Eliana when reading the NCRTs and CRTs.

Eliana was led to the same process of inference with the same texts about Christmas in Iran and Colombia. The following excerpts show her performance before reading the texts.

#### NCRT

R: *¿Qué puedes inferir de este título, y de esta imagen que acompaña al título?*

P: .....

R: *Solo dínos lo que piensas.*

P: *mmm*

R: *Dínos si no entiendes algo.*

P: *Si, ¿"The east"?*

R: *¿Y el resto del título?*

P: *The end of the year...el fin del año.*

#### CRT

R: *¿Qué puedes inferir del título del texto y de la imagen que lo acompaña?*

P: *mmmm como un lugar calmado.*

R: *Ok. ¿algo más?*

P: *Ummm No.*

R: *¿Qué más puedes inferir de la imagen?*

P: *Mmm, como un árbol decorado con luces, puede ser en la navidad que es cuando se decoran arboles y las calles.*

The NCRT's title and image did not provide the participant with any valuable interpretation of the content of the text. It seemed that Eliana did not have any relevant prior knowledge to produce an idea previous to the reading of the text.

In the case of the CRT, the title and the image provided the participant with some ideas to construct a valid interpretation of the content of the text since these elements (title/image) were connected to what the participant knows. This excerpt shows that even though the participant was familiar with the information about Christmas in her country, she did not expand her thoughts based on prior knowledge she might have had about this country and its customs at the end of the year.

The following excerpts belong to the pre-reading exercise of inference from the titles and images of the second round of text about the Chinese and Colombian tales.



## NCRT

R: *¿Qué puedes inferir y además viendo la imagen que está allí?*

P: *Como que el antídoto para una serpiente que está allí, si como el antídoto para una serpiente no sé.*

R: *¿Qué más?*

P: *Mmm...*

R: *¿Qué puedes ver en la imagen?*

P: *De la imagen como controlando algo no sé.*

R: *¿y qué mas?*

P: *Jumm, no nada más.*

## CRT

R: *¿En base a ese título y a esta imagen que ves acá que nos puedes decir?*

P: *Como que la maravillosa... como una mujer que encanta no sé.*

R: *¿Y la imagen?*

P: *Como una especie de espanto... Sí es lo que veo.*

R: *O.K ¿Los términos del título son conocidos o desconocidos para ti?*

P: *No sé qué es "Weeping"*

R: *¿Y "wandering" que es para ti?*

P: *Maravilloso...maravillosamente*

R: *OK*

In the case of NCRT Eliana was not able to predict anything deeper than just trying to translate the title of the text. For instance, in terms of the content she could have created a more elaborated mental picture, not only from the title but from the image which was very illustrative. It is worth pointing out that the participant was able to understand partially the title of the text due to the presence of two cognates in it. Such cognates helped her to decode the key words in the title.

When Eliana dealt with the inference from the CRT, the title did not evoke any relevant information, confusing the words "wander" and "wonder"; however, the image provided her with a related idea about the possible content of the text. This idea could have been improved; the participant could have related it with some previous knowledge, for example assuming that this text was a story or a myth based on the characteristics of the image. This lack of interpretation could have been a result of different factors such as the poor knowledge of the vocabulary presented in the title or the absence of creativity to hypothesize something related to the content of the text.

### 6.3.3 Arturo and Eliana's performances during the predicting stage were different.

It was noticeable Arturo's accuracy and level of engagement when dealing with both types of texts: CRTs and NCRTs; it was evidenced in the length of information provided by Arturo in all the predicting exercises. Moreover, engagement is evidenced in the fact that he always wanted to produce some kind of inference regardless the fact of being familiarized or not.

The following journal entry was taken from one of the predicting exercises that Arturo was carrying out:

*Journal entry 3: Just by looking at the titles and images of the text the participant manifests constantly his sympathy about the possible contents of the texts, using expressions such as: "ay si estos textos me encantan..."*

This type of attitude showed the participant's engagement and willingness to carry out the exercise of inference which is a step for the reader to connect with the text and activate prior knowledge during the subsequent reading.

On the other hand, Eliana's accuracy and level of engagement was slightly better when dealing with the CRTs than with the NCRTs but it was not enough providing satisfactory or thorough responses. It is worth mentioning that this participant was characterized for not being very talkative, which could be a reason for her reserved attitude in most of the interventions. However, sometimes the bad performance could have been ascribed to vocabulary unawareness which might have given her more tools to be able to hypothesize since from the images her production was also weak.

The following entry of the researchers' journal reflects the participant attitude towards the text during the predicting stage of one of the texts.

*Journal entry 2: the participant manifests her inconformity with most of the vocabulary presented in the titles of the texts. Apparently the vocabulary was unknown for her.*

This entry evidences how the participant reacted to the unknown vocabulary presented in the title of the texts. This fact might have generated a negative attitude towards the texts and towards the exercise she was exposed to.

#### *6.4 Discussing reading assessment procedures in CRTs and NCRTs.*

After all the reading sessions, the participants were asked about their impressions of the questionnaires they worked with. The following excerpt portrays Arturo's response to this question.

*P: el tipo de preguntas a mi se me hicieron mas fáciles la verdad pero no me gusta pues a mi me parece tan duro elegir una y que solo una puede ser la correcta y que las otras tres están malas entonces usted tiene menos oportunidades de sacar buenas, mientras que las preguntas de comprensión, usted tiene mas opción porque es su punto de vista, o cuando es de la lectura usted ya sabe lo que va a decir entonces usted va a tener mas chance de mejorarla o sacar un mejor puntaje...*

Arturo complains about the multiple choice questions as they tend to be very confusing. He states that a more suitable type of question in order to ask for comprehension is a question that does not require to give such specific information, where he can widely express his impressions, thoughts and ideas about the text. It can be said that the participant's comprehension of the texts was not thorough enough to evaluate the options provided by the multiple choice type of questions which would have given him confidence to deal with the exercise.

The participant even makes the same comment about the type of questions in different parts of the interviews.

*R: La primera pregunta es: ¿Cómo te sentiste leyendo el texto?*

*P: Bueno pues leyendo el texto, uno lo entiende, ¿cierto? Yo lo entendí bien y todo, pero a la hora de las preguntas, la formulación de las preguntas estaba un poquito complicada. No tanto la formulación sino por ejemplo las de tipo icfes, por ejemplo a, b, c, d, son respuestas muy similares, usted como que se confunde y le toca retomar el texto para mirar esta o esta...*

Arturo states that although his comprehension during reading was good, there were difficulties involved in answering the questions since he felt that the questionnaires were confusing. In this case the participant's opinion suggest that the multiple choice type of questions limited his initial understanding of the text to the ideas expected by the test designer. Or maybe the participant has good general comprehension of a text but also problems to identify specific information, or problems of vocabulary used in the questions.

The next excerpt shows some impressions about the questionnaires Eliana worked with after each reading session.

*R: ¿Que piensa del tipo de preguntas que le hicimos en los tests?*

*P: Pues unas me parecieron fáciles otras no tanto, algunas estaban un poco confusas, a veces lo confunden a uno, parece que fuera pero luego otra, porque las opciones son muy parecidas. También las de falso o verdadero o it doesn't say, jumm, esas si que uno como que no podía decidir cual era la correcta, entonces se le generaban a uno como mas dudas.*

Eliana expresses how she struggled with the questions in the tests. It seems that the types of questions "true-false-doesn't say" and "multiple choice" were confusing and they contributed to generate uncertainty regarding her comprehension.

Based on the participants' perceptions, it can be said that the purpose of testing reading comprehension using multiple choice and true/false/doesn't say questions was not accomplished, since these type of questions intended to depict the participant's general and specific understanding of the text. In turn, the questionnaires given to the participants caused uncertainty

at the time of finding the correct answer. Probably the nature of the questions provided in the tests was disorienting and misleading.

Based on the participants' previous comments about the types of questions they were exposed to, and also on their results in those questions, it may be suggested that comprehension questions promoted good performance in reading comprehension. On the other hand, multiple choice and true/false/doesn't say questions did not produce good results in comparison with the comprehension questions.

The following charts show those results:

<p><b>OPEN QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>Participant 1:        6/11</p> <p>Participant 2:        9/11</p>	
<p><b>(CLOSED QUESTIONS)</b></p> <p><b>MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS:</b></p> <p>Participant 1:        11/34</p> <p>Participant 2:        18/34</p>	<p><b>(CLOSED QUESTIONS)</b></p> <p><b>TRUE/FALSE/DS (doesn't say):</b></p> <p>Participant 1:        10/24</p> <p>Participant 2:        10/24</p>

When the readers answered the open questions, they got better results than answering multiple choice questions; which might imply that when they are exposed to more limited question, they tend to get more confused than when they have the opportunity to answer freely. This can be attributed to the fact that the comprehension questions require the reader to answer in an ample way giving him the opportunity to take different elements and put them together to give a general concept.

Regarding the assessment of the participants' reading comprehension and the cultural or non-cultural nature of the text, it was found that in Eliana's case the more familiarity she had with the text, the better results she obtained in the assessment procedures, that is, in the questionnaires and in the retelling exercises.

It can be also said that the close connection with the text propelled the readers' more positive attitudes towards reading exercises in contrast with the reading of NCRT in which the readers' attitudes decreased. Therefore, it was expected better results from the culturally relevant text at the time of assessing these type of readings. However, in Arturo's case there were not many differences in the results of the questionnaires related to both kinds of texts but in Eliana's case the results showed that the reader did better in the tests related to the CRTs.

### *6.5 Retelling or synthesizing as a sample of comprehension when reading CRTs and NCRTs.*

As a strategy for readers to demonstrate in a free way what they understood from the text, participants were asked to give their version of the reading at the end of each interview. The following excerpts shed light on the main characteristics of the participant's performance on this task.

#### *6.5.1 No difference at retelling the CRTs and NCRTs in Arturo's case.*

The participant was invited to summarize the first NCTR about Christmas in Iran called "The east at the end of the year". The following excerpt evidences the participant's interpretation of the text. This is an excerpt of his response.

*P: Buen... que ellos celebran cada año la navidad, colocan luces en los árboles... que hay pequeños grupos religiosos, que ellos pueden hacer sus rituales como quieran, entonces acá hablan de un ritual... que se denomina Little feast y Little fast, primero el Little fast que es desde el primero hasta el 25 de diciembre, ellos se abstienen de comer productos como carnes, entonces ellos dicen que esto les sirve para purificar la mente y el alma entonces... y luego de eso, ellos rompen con el ritual, donde tienen que recibir la comunión, y ahí empiezan con el Little feast, que es navidad en si, que es donde ellos empiezan a comer carne...*

The participant gave a complete and appropriate description of what he had read. The reading strategies that the participant used may have helped in the process of understanding the contents of the texts through the use of his schema to get the gist of the texts and to store that information in his long term memory.

In relation to one of the reading sessions dealing with the Chinese and the Colombian tales “Serpent pursuing an antidote” and “The wandering weeping woman”, Arturo was accurate when retelling both, the CRT and NCRT, which might have been fostered by his background knowledge and also by his implementation of reading strategies.

However, the results that Arturo obtained in the questionnaires related to these texts were not very high: NCRT: 5 correct answers out of 12, CRT: 5 correct answers out of 12. This fact indicates that retelling exercises can be meaningful for readers at the time of showing understanding since these practices are not as limited as questionnaires or other similar exercises. The participants’ bad performance in the reading comprehension tests might rely on the design of the questionnaires; or in Arturo’s characteristics as a reader. He may be good at getting the general picture and not so good at identifying specific information. Some of the questions asked for very specific parts of the contents of the texts, that in contrast to the retelling exercises that participants were led to do in this study, they did not require such detailed information. Probably,

reading comprehension questionnaires require from readers a profound analysis of the texts in order to elucidate for example implicit and explicit information which requires specific reading skills and processes.

#### 6.5.2 Differences when retelling the CRTs and NCRTs in Eliana's case.

The participant was asked to recapitulate the first NCRT about Christmas in Iran called “the east at the end of the year”. The following excerpt shows the participant's response when retelling the text. This is an excerpt of her response.

*P: Bueno todo se trata sobre la Navidad en Irán, las religiones, los rituales que llevan. Dice que ellos tienen como tres etapas, no sé como decirlas. Hay una que se llama...no me acuerdo muy bien ahora pero es donde comen huevos. Que es como una etapa entre el 1º y el 25 de diciembre. Es donde creo que ellos comen huevos y es como algo referente a los animales. Ehhh ya cuando llega la Navidad empiezan a tener muchas costumbres pero también hay algo que se llama la Purificación...como del cuerpo, de la mente, entonces ellos se preparan como para la Etapa del Prefax o algo así...*

The participant's low results when answering the questionnaire of this text are also reflected in the low performance when retelling the same text. The participant provided very general information, and when she tried to be more specific the information was not accurate. Eliana provided fragmented ideas of the text that did not consolidate a strong or complete idea of it.

The results obtained in the questionnaire related to the first NCRT were not very good since the participant only got 3 correct answers out of 11. Eliana's low performance in the questionnaires combined with her feeble retelling of the text might be a result of the poor management of reading skills and the lack of some previous knowledge about the text.



Eliana did the same exercise of retelling with the first CRT. This is the excerpt of her response.

*P: Bueno, primero habla de que en Colombia se maneja lo que es la Navidad, ésta es como el nacimiento del Niño Dios, bueno cuando se reúnen todas las familias que para compartir... Pero en sí centra que la Navidad comienza el 7 de diciembre con lo de “las velitas”, que varios barrios y muchos pueblos prenden lucecitas. Que algunos barrios hacen competencias de cuál es el barrio más iluminado entonces prenden la radio. También habla de que han ido influyendo los fuegos pirotécnicos... Que el 15 o el 16, no me acuerdo muy bien, comienzan las novenas que duran 9 días y que el 24 terminan porque es el Nacimiento del Niño Dios...*

The participant gave an accurate description of the text by identifying the main features of the content of the text. It was evident the influence of the previous knowledge related to the text to reconstruct some ideas. The evidence of this is based on the information provided by the participant that covered some aspects that were not included in the content of the text.

Her answer led us to believe that the cultural load might have contributed to the understanding of the text but the reader needed to be more careful not to assume or add information that is part of prior knowledge.

In relation to the other 2 NCRT's retellings, the participant showed a very confusing display of information, which might have been a product of the fragmented and incomplete comprehension of the text.

The following excerpts belong to an entry from the researchers' journal and from one of the interviews conducted with Eliana after being exposed to the reading of the second CRT where it is evident the impact of the cultural familiarity with the text when retelling it.

*Journal entry 10: After being exposed to 4 reading sessions, the participants have shown more confidence when retelling the CRTs than when retelling NCRTs. This seems to be caused by the cultural familiarity with the content of the texts. Moreover, the information*

*provided during the retellings was more accurate and complete with these texts than when retelling information from NCRTs.*

*R: ¿y como te sentiste en el resumen de este texto?*

*P: aa pues muy bien, la información es muy fácil de recordar porque además son cosas que uno ya conoce entonces uno se siente con seguridad, como con elementos para salir con algo bueno.*

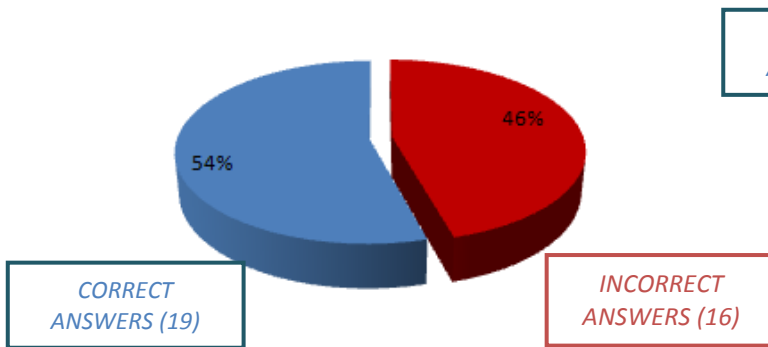
The previous excerpts support the idea that the cultural familiarity with the texts promoted a more confident attitude towards the retelling exercise.

### *6.5.3 Arturo and Eliana's performance were different when retelling the texts.*

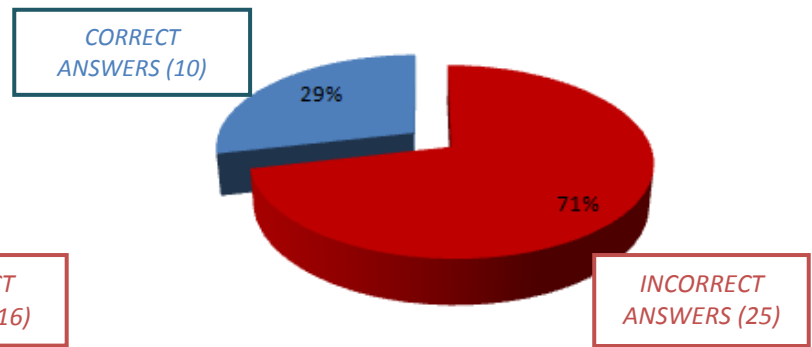
The retelling exercises showed that Arturo's performance was consistent in terms of the accuracy when reporting CRTs and NCRTs. On the other hand, Eliana's performance evidenced more accuracy when retelling the CRTs than the NCRTs. It can be said that Arturo's implementation of reading strategies allowed him to understand and report accurately the content of the texts regardless of his unfamiliarity with the NCRTs. In the case of Eliana, her lack of reading strategies hindered her from reporting thoroughly the texts. However, when reporting the CRTs the information provided was more complete than when retelling the NCRTs, which can be attributed to the cultural familiarity that she encountered in the CRTs. Eliana's better performance with the CRTs is evidenced when reporting that she felt more comfortable when retelling these texts because of her acquaintance with their contents that enabled to recall more easily the information.

The following results show Arturo's and Eliana's results of the questionnaires related to all the NCRTs.

Arturo's NCRT's results.



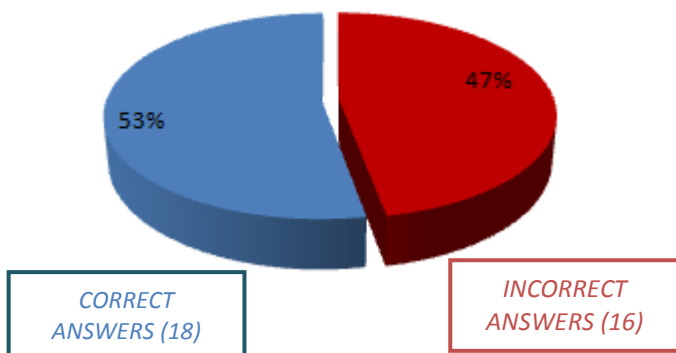
Eliana's NCRT's results.



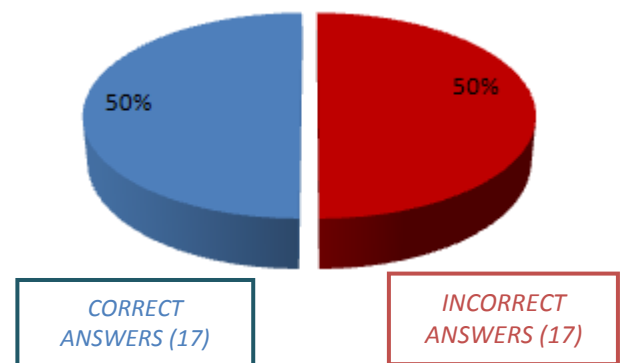
These results confirm that Eliana had more difficulties than Arturo dealing with the NCRTs' questionnaires; which reflects Eliana's poor reading abilities to be able to answer the questions presented in the questionnaires.

The following were the participant's results from the questionnaires related to all the CRTs.

Arturo's CRT's results.



Eliana's CRT's results.



These results portray Eliana's improvement when dealing with CRTs that in the case of Arturo the results were almost the same in comparison with the NCRTs. It can be suggested that Eliana benefit from the familiarity with the content of the text. It is evidenced that Arturo proved to be a more competent reader than Eliana since his results were consistent in both kinds of texts with the questionnaires and the performance in the retelling exercises.

## 7. DISCUSSION

This section is devoted to show how the findings from this research are related to relevant theory in the field. The discussion is grouped into the following categories: Cultural knowledge had different roles in the participants' reading comprehension when reading CRT and NCRT; the use of reading strategies influenced the participant's reading comprehension of CRTs and NCRTs; led implementation of predicting strategy as an activating and engaging exercise previous to the reading of NCRTs and CRTs; analyzing reading assessment procedures in CRTs and NCRTs; and retelling or synthesizing as a sample of comprehension when reading CRTs and NCRTs.

### *7.1 Cultural knowledge had different roles in the participants' reading comprehension when reading CRT and NCRT.*

It has been broadly discussed that prior knowledge plays an active role in the process of reading and comprehending a text. Christen and Murphy (1991) states that research on enriching background knowledge has demonstrated that activating such knowledge increases comprehension. Our study confirms that prior knowledge to the reading of a text is an important element that supplements reading comprehension, specially for struggling readers who might benefit from texts about familiar topics to perform better in reading comprehension tests, but the fact that the reader is acquainted with the topic of a text does not guarantee that he is going to have a thorough comprehension, the familiarity with the text is one of the elements that facilitate good understanding but it is not the only one. As McNamara (2007) points out, reading strategies are particularly important when there is a breakdown at any level of comprehension. Successful

readers implement deliberate, conscious strategies which require effort and time. Readers can not rely on prior knowledge as the only strategy to implement while reading in order to comprehend better the texts. Linguistic knowledge such as vocabulary is essential in the reading process to promote understanding of the text. Moreover, the reader must be equipped with some reading strategies that allow him to deal with parts of the text which require more elaborated analysis and interpretations. The previous finding is also supported by Iwai (2010) who argues that successful reading is achieved through the construction of meaning with various approaches, such as using background knowledge, analyzing words, inferring the text, and identifying key vocabulary or information. Although the results in the questionnaires were low in both participants, one of them, Arturo, was benefited by the implementation of reading strategies to get better results than the other participant. This reveals that the cultural familiar attribute of a text is not a decisive element for readers to approach a text. Research on the topic of prior knowledge does not make emphasis on skillful readers and what is the possible impact of being familiar with the content of a text related to reading comprehension and performance in tests.

On the other hand, cultural relevant components included in a text play an important role in the readers' attitudes. Christen and Murphy (1991) indicate that the linkage of information in the text with the readers' prior knowledge activates their interests in reading the texts. This idea is connected to our finding which shows that some readers find motivation around texts that are culturally relevant for them more than they do with a NCRT as it was the case of Eliana. This fact also implies the reading process might become more accessible and pleasant. Macceca (2007) points out that readers connect effectively their personal lives and experiences with the issues they are familiarized with in a reading, in this way using and building prior knowledge becomes

essential to improve reading comprehension. Moreover Herrero (2006) corroborates this idea stating that the implementation of cultural relevant literature promotes participation, commitment and success in reading tasks.

In the case of the NCRTs, the lack of familiarity with the topic combined with the linguistic difficulties that it has, tends to overwhelm the reader generating lack of interest and engagement.

It was also evidenced in this study that one of the participants found motivation around both kinds of text, CRTs and NCRTs, even if the content of the text was non culturally relevant. Those types of texts which have some cultural components were appealing and relevant for him. According to DeVillar, Faltis and Cummins (1994) texts that are culturally loaded promote positive cross cultural attitudes in readers because texts are also intended to transmit values, norms, and attitudes.

### *7.2 The use of reading strategies influenced the participant's reading comprehension of CRTs and NCRTs*

The results of the current study show that the implementation of reading strategies is a decisive tool in the process of attempting to comprehend a text. As Jimenez, Garcia, and Pearson (1995) stated, reading strategies are contemplated as conscious processes applied by readers to facilitate deeper levels of understanding.

Pressley (1998) cited by Zhang, Y (2009) argues that skillful readers read actively and make use of a variety of strategies during reading. In our research, it was confirmed that when readers make use of different reading strategies their understanding of a text and performance in comprehension tests is positively affected.

One of the readers used some reading strategies such as getting main ideas of paragraphs and making use of context to find out unknown words. According to National Reading Panel (2000) cited by Zhang, Y (2009), some of the most effective reading strategies used by readers are associating prior knowledge with the ideas in the text, guessing the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary based on context clues and summarizing. We found that the most frequent strategy used by the participants was rereading. McNamara (2007) quoted by Pressley (2000) states that good readers use the rereading strategy to facilitate comprehension. This idea is supported by our finding which suggests a positive influence in the understanding of the text product of the rereading strategy in one of the participants. However, for the reading strategy to be successful it demands a skillful level of awareness in its use and it needs to be purposefully accompanied by other reading strategies. It is not enough to re-read parts of a text in order to understand, the reader needs to use some other strategies such as identifying cognates, using background knowledge, identifying references in the text and identifying key words that denote functions in the text, sequences, affirmation, contradiction, cause and consequences. This is supported by the results obtained by one our participants, who reported to have used only this reading strategy and whose results in NCRTs were very poor. Based on this we found that if the process of reading is left only to this repetitive behavior, there will not be a successful way to grasp meaning from the text.

### *7.3 Led implementation of predicting strategy as an activating and engaging exercise previous to the reading of NCRTs and CRTs.*

It was found that the exposure and analysis of the title and image before reading a text can evoke the possible content to be developed in the text; moreover, this reading strategy generates motivation and engagement. The previous ideas support what Harvey and Goudvis (2007) and Moreillon (2007) state regarding the process of predicting, when they say that reading comprehension can be supported by pictures and titles to anticipate outcomes, infer ideas, and create meaning. Moreover, readers who make predictions and inferences before, during and after they read are actively engaged in the process of making meaning. Moreillon (2007) also argues that making predictions and inferences are a sample of specific types of questioning strategies. Although the participants were induced to do the exercise of predicting, we reported in our findings that one reader was able to question the title of one of the texts in a spontaneous way without being asked; therefore it can be assumed that this participant performed the predicting strategy with a higher level of awareness than the other reader. At this stage we found that the skillful application of the inferring and predicting strategy reflects the good proficiency of the reader and as Carrasquillo, Kucer and Abrams (2004) posit, good readers in contrast to poor readers, use strategies before, during, and after reading making educated guesses, connections, and judgments in order to facilitate the meaning-making process. Carrasquillo, Kucer and Abrams (2004) also claim that making inferences and predictions require readers to count on the available information and on their own prior knowledge. Our emerging finding aligns with the previous concepts; inferring is a reading strategy that needs to be built on a certain level and mastery of the foreign language. In first place, to infer information you need to have prior



knowledge that allow you make connections between what you know and what you are about to read. This is where the cultural relevance of the text was important. Our study shows that if the reader is familiarized with the content of a text, the predicting process might be positively impacted, facilitating the reader to generate more ideas as one of the initial stages before dealing with a text. This finding is supported Gunning (2010) who states that for the predicting process to be successful, readers should use their prior knowledge to be able to assume what is likely to happen, and even more if the content of the text is familiar for them. However, we found that the predicting stage is not exclusively linked to the characteristics of the texts; the reader must be equipped with relevant vocabulary to be able to interpret the titles of the texts.

#### *7.4 Analyzing reading assessment procedures in CRTs and NCRTs.*

According to Caldwell (2008) reading is a process that is complex and versatile; therefore, assessing this process is also complex and versatile and it can not be left out only to a particular way of assessing. Our findings suggest that using multiple choice and true/false/doesn't say questions as the only instrument does not effectively assess reading comprehension, and may cause doubt or uncertainty at the time of demonstrating readers' understanding of texts. We found in our research that other methods such as retelling the content of a text or answering open questions promote good performance and reveal more clearly reading understanding of a text; it means that readers may get better results because they have the opportunity to answer freely and they are not puzzled by the limitations of those formal tests. This finding supports Caldwell (2008) who affirms that formal assessing instruments are less authentic than informal measures

which are similar to the actual task of reading where reading a passage and retelling its contents are more authentic than reading a text and answering multiple choice questions on a scan sheet.

A different finding from this study related to assessment suggests that the readers at the time of being assessed reading comprehension prefer to be exposed to texts which are culturally bounded to the reader; this fact also propels the reader's more positive attitude towards tests and therefore obtaining better results. Alderson (2000) supports this finding stating that background knowledge is an important element that should be understood as influencing in all reading comprehension assessment, and therefore every attempt should be made to allow background knowledge to facilitate performance in reading tests, rather than allowing its absence to inhibit good performance. This fact evidences that certain types of texts such as culturally relevant texts are more appealing for readers than others especially in the process of being assessed reading comprehension.

### *7.5 Retelling CRTs and NCRTs as a sample of reading comprehension*

The present study indicates that retelling exercises can be meaningful for readers at the time of showing understanding since these practices are not as limited as questionnaires or other similar exercises. The previous finding is supported by Bos (1987) cited by Klingner, Vaughn, Boardman (2007) arguing that retelling can be an effective practice for determining and assuring reading comprehension of texts. Moreover, it was found that Cultural familiarity with the texts promotes a more confident attitude towards the retelling exercise because when readers get only some general ideas about the content of a text that is CR, a retelling exercise allowed them to

cover the absence of this specific knowledge using prior knowledge about the content of the texts. Ebe (2010) supports this finding readers' proficiency in the retelling exercises were higher when they were exposed to texts that were categorized as culturally relevant for them.

## 8. INSTRUCTIONAL AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This study has some important implications for teaching and research practices.

English teachers and learners might take advantage of this study to reflect on some aspects that can be useful to enhance their own performance in teaching and learning practices. To begin with, teachers must be aware of the importance of instructing learners on the use of reading strategies because most learners do not know how to use them effectively or they do not even know that reading strategies exist. Thus, the reading comprehension process would be easier and more effective.

Beginner readers or language learners can benefit from texts which include information that is culturally relevant for them; since readers can connect what they know with the new information presented in the text. Moreover, readers might feel more engaged and motivated when a text presents something familiar for them, something that they encounter in their daily lives and experiences. Therefore, teachers should contemplate the implementation of culturally relevant loaded texts in their teaching practices at early stages. On the other hand, learning a language should go beyond learning grammatical, syntactical or morphological aspects of the language, it should imply learning about the culture that is framed in the language being taught along with the proper culture of the learners. Non culturally relevant texts might be of a great help for intermediate and advanced language learners who need to expand their learning in terms of cultural, linguistic and literacy aspects. In order to appropriately select the type of input to be included in the texts, teachers need to diagnose by means of an instrument their students' interests and needs. Thus, reading exercise might become more enjoyable and attractive for learners. The fact of not taking into account the multiplicity of traits that students bring to classroom may have poor results in students' performance. Hence, a needs analysis must be conducted at the beginning of English courses so as to consider students' preferences, needs and learning styles at the time of designing courses.

Another important implication deals with assessing reading; teachers should use more flexible instruments at the time of evaluating reader's performance in order to provide learners with more opportunities to develop their reading skills since standardized tests can be easier to grade for teachers but they offer less chances to accurately measure reading comprehension. For example the use of comprehension questions or retelling exercises are good choices to be implemented as valid assessment procedures. Moreover, teachers need to consider that assessing reading does not imply to evaluate the correct use of grammatical aspects as this linguistic competence is not the only one involved in reading comprehension.

This study also uncovers some suggestions for future research implementations.

Firstly, further studies can be focused on what strategies readers use specifically to deal with questionnaires related to reading comprehension. Research on this topic might shed light on the instruction of appropriate reading strategies for teachers to apply in specific purposes.

Future researches can also discuss the impact of cultural knowledge on the listening, writing and speaking English learning skills. This might reveal some insights about the effect that the cultural load exerts on other kind of input different from reading, and the impact on the general performance of learners when producing their output.

Finally, this study might be applied with participants equipped with an advanced English proficiency level to analyze what the impact of culturally relevant texts would be on their reading process combined with their use of strategies when reading and answering comprehension questionnaires.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

After having conducted this study, it was found that texts which contain some cultural information familiar to the reader have a positive impact specially on struggling readers. These texts generate more possibilities for readers to connect their own knowledge from life and experiences with the information contained in the texts; therefore reading comprehension might be improved. Moreover, the results of this study suggest that motivation and engagement towards reading practices are increased when readers deal with a text that reflects familiar and cultural traits for them. Nevertheless, this study found that reading comprehension can not rely only on the cultural familiarity to be effective; readers need to be aware of the knowledge and appropriate use of reading strategies to enhance comprehension and good performance in reading tests. Vocabulary knowledge also plays an important role in the process of reading and understanding a text. Another relevant finding portrayed in this study has to do with appropriate reading comprehension assessment, the common procedures used in reading assessment need to be more flexible in order to offer readers opportunities to show understanding in a way that they do not feel limited only to answering multiple choice and true or false questions; other more flexible and informal procedures which showed to be valid to assess reading comprehension were comprehension questions and retelling exercises.

This study serves as a small contribution for the English learning field; teachers may consider analyzing and reflecting on readers' reading comprehension at different English proficiency levels to apply or modify teaching methods and assessment techniques. Further research can be implemented to examine different variables to improve reading comprehension practices, teaching and assessment techniques.

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## Annexes

*Annex 1*

Texts and questionnaires

First round:

**The East at the end of the year (NCRT)**



Predominantly a **Muslim nation**, Iran has a sizeable Christian population. The majority of Iranian Christians are Armenian-Iranians also known as Parska-Hye who follow Oriental Orthodox branch of Christianity and celebrate their very own special festivals and traditions. Apart from them are also Assyrians, Catholics, Protestants and Evangelical Christians.

Every year, the Iranian Christians celebrate the occasion by decorating Christmas trees, exchanging gifts, and attending services. During Christmas season, Christmas Trees can be seen from Windows in Tehran and north-western provinces of the country. Although a minority religious group in Iran, Christians of Iran are free to practice their religion and perform their religious rituals.

During Christmas, joy and merriment reigns supreme for the Christian population all over the country. Christmas in Iran is popularly known by the name of "Little Feast". Although Christmas has an official recognition in Iran, it is not a national holiday. The festival is preceded by "Little Fast", or 25 days of fasting from animal products. The ritual is observed, mainly by the Assyrians, from December 1 and needs one to abstain from meat, eggs and even dairy products such as milk and cheese. For devout Christians, it is a time of peace and meditation. The fasting is intended to purify the mind, body and soul to welcome Christ. Most of the community attend church services during the time. While the "Little Fast" is observed from December 1 - December 25, the "Big Fast" occurs during Lent, the six weeks preceding Easter. It is not until the "Little Fast" ends that the Christmas feast begins. The Christmas Eve is the last day of the "Little Fast" and even before dawn on Christmas Day, the people attend Mass to receive Communion. It is only after they receive this Communion that they are permitted to break fast.

Thereupon, preparations for the great Christmas feast begin. Plenty of meat is cooked up for the celebrations. The main dish for Christmas Day is a kind of chicken barley stew, popularly known as "Harrissa", which is cooked in large quantities and is stored and eaten for several days. For

Iranian boys and girls, Christmas week is the time for happiness. It is the occasion when they can indulge in joyous celebrations and gorge on delicious recipes once again.

***The East at the end of the year - Questionnaire***

Choose the Correct answer according to the text:

- 1) What does the term ***Muslim nation*** in line 1 refer to?
  - a. Kind of religion
  - b. Characteristic of the nation
  - c. Both**
  - d. None
  
- 2) According to the text we can infer that...
  - a. The majority of Iranians are Muslim**
  - b. Few Iranians are Muslims
  - c. Half of the population are Muslim
  - d. The majority of Iranians are Christian
  
- 3) What is **not** true about the text?
  - a. Christians of Iran are not allowed to practice their own religious customs**
  - b. Some of their traditions are similar to Colombian traditions.
  - c. Most Christians in Iran are permitted to practice their religion.
  - d. Christmas is partially recognize as a popular celebration in the whole country
  
- 4) Little Feast and little Fast are:
  - a. Celebrations.
  - b. Rituals.**
  - c. Customs.
  - d. None.

- 5) The Christmas Eve is:
- a. **The same Christmas Day.**
  - b. The day after Christmas.
  - c. Both.
  - d. None.

**Comprehension questions**

- 1) What is the prevalent religion in Iran?
- 2) How free are people to practice different religions in Iran?
- 3) When is little fast celebrated?
- 4) How is fast broken?
- 5) What do Christians do after breaking fast?
- 6) How different is Christmas in Iran from Christmas in Colombia?

### Colombian “Night of Peace” (CRT)



Far away of **secular** traditions in few countries, Christmas in Colombia is primarily a religious holiday. Presents are brought by *El Niño Dios* (Baby Jesus) instead of Santa Claus, whose gift giving role has been downplayed some by the Church. However, Santa Claus is still an important Christmas figure, as Santa decorations are common, and Santa can be seen posing for pictures at shopping malls.

While Christmas decorations may be put up as early as the beginning of November, by most of the people, the unofficial start of Colombian Christmas festivities takes place on December 7 with the "Day of the Candles." At night, the streets, sidewalks, balconies, porches, and driveways are decorated with candles and paper lanterns, which illuminate cities and towns in a yellow glow to honor **the Immaculate Conception** the following day, December 8. Activities such as musical events and firework displays are planned by cities and held during this time.

In many cities, and even in small rural towns, neighborhoods get together and decorate their whole neighborhood or street, turning streets into virtual "tunnels of light." Many radio stations and local organizations hold contests for the best display of lights, making the competition for the best light show a serious event.

Fireworks were a common item during the holiday season in Colombia, often going on at any time of the day everyday in many cities, but a recent ban of fireworks has decreased the use of them, and now only cities or towns are able to hold firework displays.

December 16th is the first day of the Christmas **Novena**, a devotion consisting of prayer said on nine successive days, the last one held on **Christmas Eve**. The Novena is promoted by the Church as a staple of Christmas. It is a call for an understanding of the religious meaning of Christmas, and a way to counter the commercialism of the Christmas season. Individual traditions concerning the Novena may vary, but most families set up a *pesebre* (manger scene), sing religious Christmas carols called villancicos accompanied by tambourines, bells, and other simple percussion instruments, and read verses from the Bible as well as an interpretation which may change from year to year. From December 16 to 18, some people play games called *aguinaldos*. The games include *Hablar y no contestar*, *Dar y no recibir*, *Si y no*, *Tres pies*, *Beso robado*, and *Pajita en boca*.

Churches offer nightly masses during the nine days of the novena, culminating with the *Misa de Gallo* (Rooster's Mass) on Christmas Eve at midnight.

Christmas Eve is the most important day of Christmas in Colombia. Families and friends get together to pray the last Novena and wait until midnight to open the presents, kids stay up late playing with their new presents, and fireworks fill the skies. Because Christmas Eve is the most important day, little goes on December 25.

### Colombian “Night of Peace” - Questionnaire

Choose the correct answer according to the text:

- 1) The text affirms that
  - a) Santa Claus is the main character of Christmas in Colombia
  - b) Santa Claus was the most important icon of Christmas in Colombia
  - c) Santa Claus is recognized broadly as a secondary figure of Christmas in Colombia
  - d) **Santa Claus has been rejected by some people in Colombia as the essence of Colombian traditions**
  
- 2) What is true about the text?
  - a) **Few people start adorning their houses on December**
  - b) Christmas adorns/decorations are set up after the “Day of the Candles”
  - c) The Immaculate Conception is celebrated before the “Day of the Candles”
  - d) The “Day of the Candles” is celebrated mainly as a celebration only among the family members
  
- 3) The text does **not** say
  - a) The novenas might be the way of giving back the religious message to Christmas
  - b) The church is concerned about the current Christmas traditions
  - c) **Few people keep practicing Christmas traditions.**
  - d) Aspects of the Novenas are different depending on the people who practice them.



- 4) The term **Christmas Eve** makes reference to
- a) December 16 to 25
  - b) December 24th**
  - c) December 25th
  - d) The whole December month
- 5) What does the text affirm?
- a) People give presents each other only until midnight on Christmas.**
  - b) Christmas has the same amusement than the day before it.
  - c) The majority celebrations are finished by midnight.
  - d) All Colombian children have their presents on Christmas morning.

### **Comprehension questions**

- 1) What do you think the word secular means?
- 2) In the 5th paragraph what does the author's reflection towards the commercialization of Christmas?
- 3) What does the "Day of the Candles" mean?
- 4) What has been the state's policy towards fireworks?
- 5) What does the church expect from the Christmas celebrations?

Second round:

### The Wandering Weeping Woman (CRT)



*La Llorona* is Spanish for "The Crying woman," and is a popular legend in Spanish-speaking cultures in the Spanish colonies of the Americas, with many versions. The basic version is that La Llorona was a beautiful woman who killed her children to be with the man that she loved and was subsequently rejected by him. He might have been the children's father, and left their mother for another woman, or he might have been a man she loved, but who was uninterested in a relationship with a woman with children, and whom she thought she could win if the children were out of the way. She drowned the children then after being rejected killed herself, and is doomed to wander, searching for her children for all eternity, always weeping, which is the reason for her name, La Llorona. In some cases, according to the tale, she will kidnap wandering children or children who do not behave.

Typically, the legend serves as a cautionary tale on several levels. Parents will warn their children that bad behavior will cause her to steal them and being outside after dark will result in a visit from the spirit. The tale also warns teenage girls not to be enticed by status, wealth, material goods, or by men making declarations of love or any promises too good to be true. It also cautions them not to express their sexual desires. Some also believe that those who hear the wails of La Llorona are marked for death, similar to the Gaelic **banshee** or bean sidhe legend. Additionally, the tale is a Mexican and Central American cultural symbol that models negative and despised feminine sexuality, where *La Llorona* is the archetypal evil woman condemned to eternally suffer and weep for violating her role as a wife and a mother. She is a failed woman because she has failed at motherhood. The tale serves to shape Mexican and Chicana women's conduct by prescribing an idealized version of motherhood. La llorona is also known as *La Andalona*.

### The wandering weeping woman - questionnaire

Choose the correct answer according to the text:

1. Why did she kill her children?
  - a. Because children were an obstacle for her relationship**
  - b. Because the woman did not want to her children
  - c. Because the woman was asked to do it
  - d. Because the woman wanted to avenge her husband by leaving her
  
2. The weeping woman's children died because of the effects of
  - a. Water**
  - b. Poison
  - c. Electricity
  - d. Blows
  
3. Why did she commit suicide
  - a. Because she was repented of what she did
  - b. Because she could not be with the man she wanted**
  - c. Because she was fed up with her life
  - d. Because of the pressure people put on her
  
4. According to the legend how does the woman manifest
  - a. In a solitary sad spirit seeking peace
  - b. In a lost sad soul seeking her children**
  - c. In a sad evil spirit looking for revenge
  - d. In a sad crazy spirit looking for bad children

5. Why is important the legend “la Llorona” to the Spanish culture
- Because it delineates a model of acceptable behavior for children**
  - Because it remembers an important issue for the folklore
  - Because it should be imposed to children
  - Because it represents a real story that should be maintained
6. The word **wails** in the paragraph can be replaced by
- laments**
  - Screams
  - Whispers
  - Irritations

**Choose True (T) or False (F) or doesn't say (DS).**

- The spirit of the woman will show up if children are not at home **T/F/DS**
- Children are ordered to behave well not to provoke the weeping woman to appear **T/F/DS**
- Mundane Temptations will not have a cost for those who fall into them. **T/F/DS**
- The weeping woman changes the women's disordered lives. **T/F/DS**
- The weeping woman represents the sacrifices around the formation of a self-sacrificing woman **T/F/DS**
- The weeping woman is understood to be in hell **T/F/DS**

### Serpent Pursuing an Antidote (NCRT)



The story is set in the Southern Song Dynasty.

A female white snake demon, **Bai SuZhen**, dreams of transforming into a goddess by doing good deeds, so she takes on human form and goes to the human realm. There she meets a green snake demon, **Xiao Qing**, who causes disasters in the area she lived. Bai SuZhen holds her captive at the bottom of a lake, though she promises the green snake that she'll come back in three hundred years to free her.

After three hundred years she keeps her promise and frees her. They bond as sisters. They meet a sorcerer called **FaHai** who believes that every demon should be destroyed. But Bai was too powerful and he can't eliminate her immediately so he vows that he will if he sees them again.

Fearing that they would meet more human sorcerers, Bai and Qing retreat into the world between demon and human world called **Ban Bu Duo** where they try to do good things by bringing rain to places that hasn't had any water for three years. But Qing was careless and almost flooded the whole town. because of this, Bai sadly loses her chance of becoming a goddess. However Guan Yin informs her that she may have yet another opportunity.

In the meantime Bai and Qing accidentally brought a scholar **Xu Xian** and his friend to the demon world. Bai protected them from demons and in the process fell in love with Xu Xian. After the battle with the Leader of the underworld, Xu Xian confesses his feelings for Bai, claiming that it was love at first sight. But in order for a human to go back to the human world they have to become unconscious and in the process also forget their time in the demon world. Xu Xian knows and avoids being knocked out. However, FaHai somehow found a way into the demon world and seeing Xu Xian, tricks him into being knocked out.

Now Xu Xian is back into the human world and has forgotten everything. Since he and his friend went through the portal separately they land in separate places. There Xu Xian meets many new people.

Soon after Bai takes the final step to becoming a goddess which is to collect human tears. Bai sees Xu Xian with another girl and assumes that they are a couple. The former green snake, Xiao Qing, realises that when Xu Xian and Bai meet, Xu Xian will again fall in love with Bai and so arranges a meeting. They then got married, opened a medicine shop and lived happily.

But as demons and humans are not supposed to join, the town was struck by a plague and it was soon on the verge of total destruction. Bai, Qing and FaHai finally agreed to a truce and obtained the magical herb needed to help the population.

Later Bai gets pregnant, but Fahai continues to try to eliminate her and Qing.

On the fifth day of the fifth month, the Dragon Boat Festival is held. On that day demons revert to their true selves. Bai thus decides to take Qing and Xu Xian back to Ban Bu Duo, but Xu Xian falls for FaHai's tricks yet again and Bai shows her true self, scaring Xian literally to death. Bai retrieves the herbal medicine which brings Xian back to life.

But after giving birth to a son Bai can't control herself anymore and is forced to tell her husband the truth about her origins. Xian kindly accepts her, but Fahai then attacks the weakened Bai and holds her to eternal captivity in the Leifeng Pagoda.

### Serpent Pursuing an Antidote – Questionnaire

Choose the correct answers according to the text :

- 1) What does Bai think about the effect of her actions?
  - a) They must be immediate and short-term
  - b) They must be noble and obligatory**
  - c) They are useless
  - d) They are imperfect
  
- 2) When using “Vows” in the text what is Fahai meaning?
  - a) Frightening
  - b) Threatening**
  - c) Counseling
  - d) Mortifying
  
- 3) **Ban Bu duo** offers
  - a) Protection**
  - b) Unconsciousness
  - c) Intrigue
  - d) Non of them
  
- 4) According to the legend, unconsciousness is necessary for humans when:
  - a) They are in a demon world.
  - b) They want to forget the demon world where they are.

- c) **They trespass the demon world to the human one.**
  - d) They are accidentally in a demon world.
- 5) According to the text, when **Xu Xian** was about to be knocked out, we can say:
- a) **Fahai was not in the demon world.**
  - b) Fahai was in the demon world.
  - c) Fahai was the leader of the under world.
  - d) Fahai was the one who provoked that **Bai** and **Xu Xiant** fell in love.
- 6) Why did Bai have to protect Xu Xiant?
- a) **Because she felt she owed one to him**
  - b) Because she fell in love with him
  - c) Because she needed to do good deeds to become a goddess
  - d) Because she was asked to do by **Xiao Qing**.

**Choose True (T) or False (F) or doesn't say (DS).**

- 1) According to the legend we can affirm that just good intentions are not a passport to divinity  
T / F / DS
- 2) The legend shows clearly that for human and demons is not possible to converge in the same world T / F / DS
- 3) **Bai** becomes fragile when she is in **Ban Bu duo** T / F / DS
- 4) People was doomed to death by the Gods because of what people had permitted. T / F / DS
- 5) **Xu Xian** was about to die due to frightening T / F / DS
- 6) **Bai** and **Fahai** always had an irreconcilable relationship T / F / DS

Third round:

### Colombian Coffee Region (CRT)



In Colombia, the Coffee Region is formed by the departments of Caldas, Quindío, and Risaralda. This is where the best mild coffee in the world is grown and, in order to discover the deepest secrets of a great gourmet coffee, you must tour the Colombian Coffee Region and experience and enjoy its climates and landscapes.

Nature truly captivates its visitors in the Colombian Coffee Region. Amid the soft rolling hills of a plantation, tourists will discover a world of unsuspected beauty. And they will meet hard-working, prosperous people who will offer the hospitality of their coffee haciendas.

Within this land of rolling hills and coffee **crops**, there is a hidden world of unexpected pleasures. The Coffee Region has become the first rural tourist destination in Latin America, thanks to the upgrading of traditional haciendas for quality **lodging**. Visitors will find luxurious suites, theme parks, golf courses, extreme sports, beautiful locations and, of course, coffee in all stages of the production process.

An excellent road network allows easy travel throughout the entire region. Whether you are here for business, contemplating nature or adventuring in it, or simply relaxing, the Colombian Coffee Region is an original, unusual, and elegant option.

Manizales, Armenia and Pereira, the capitals of Caldas, Quindío, and Risaralda respectively, compete in hospitality. Deciding which one is the best is not easy at all.

The Colombian Coffee Region has a variety of thermal floors: from the hottest, on the banks of the Cauca River, to the **frosty** summits of the snow-covered mountains of the region. Manizales has a cool climate. Armenia and Pereira are warm.

The region's main urban areas are located between 900 and 2150 meters (2950-7050 ft.) above sea level.

The Coffee Region is located on the central mountain range of the Colombian Andes.



In order to get to the coffee region, you can make it by plane, arriving at any of the airports of the Coffee Region, although the most important one is Matecaña in Pereira. Arriving by land is also easy due to the Triangle's location in the central part of the country.

Manizales and Armenia have taxis and intra- and inter-municipal buses. Aside from the above, Pereira has a mass transport bus system called Megabús.

### Colombian Coffee region – Questionnaire

Choose the Correct answer according to the text:

1) The intention of the first paragraph is:

- e. Simply to give some introductory information.
- f. To Impact the reader inviting him to visit the coffee region.**
- g. To inform the reader deeply on the coffee region.
- h. None of them.

2) The second paragraph meant that:

- a. It is not possible so much beauty in this place. .
- b. The most beautiful places in this region are unexplored.
- c. There are some wonders hidden in this region.**
- d. All of them.

3) According to the text the advancement of the coffee region:

- a. is surprisingly unexpected.
- b. is the result of the commitment of individuals and group efforts.
- c. is the product of the natural quality of the region.
- d. is the effect of the region's necessities.

4) In the third paragraph, the term crops refer to:

- e. Plantations**

- f. Haciendas
- g. Workers
- h. None

5) In the third paragraph the term lodging refers to:

- i. Touring
- j. Recreation
- k. Entertaining
- l. Housing or hostelling**

6) In paragraph 6, in the line that says:“Frosty summits of the snow-covered mountains” a synonym of the word frosty may be:

- m. Wonderful
- n. Remote
- o. Cold**
- p. High
- q.

**Choose True (T) or False (F) or doesn't say (DS) according to the text.**

- 1) According to the text, the best coffee in the world is produced in the coffee region.  
T/F/DS
- 2) In the coffee region, tourist can find different things to do and have fun.  
**T/F/DS**
- 3) The routes in the coffee region are in good conditions.  
**T/F/DS**
- 4) Matecaña airport is the only one of the coffee region that is international.  
T/F/**DS**
- 5) Transportation in Pereira is the best of the coffee region.  
T/F/**DS**
- 6) Tourists will see things in the Colombian coffee region that are common in other places in Colombia.  
T/F/DS

### Big Sky Country (NCRT)



There are many popular tourist attractions in England for the travelers to visit. You can choose your favorite place in England to travel round the whole country. Don't forget to visit southern England with beautiful picturesque sites.

England Tourist Attractions are many. Start with London, the capital and the largest city of the country. Visit some of the historical sites in the city. The vibrant city life of London is worth exploring. You should visit the Tate Modern or the Museum of Trafalgar Square. Go to the Borough Market on the weekend and spend some lovely time there.

Some of the many fascinating tourist attractions in England are the Isle of Anglesey, Bath, Brecon Beacons, Caernarfon, Cardigan, Cheltenham, Iron Bridge, Lincoln, Salisbury, Wells, Winchcombe and others. Out of these The Isle of Anglesey is regarded as the "Area of outstanding natural beauty". There is a huge 125 coastline along the bay with remarkable scenic beauty. You can visit the Beaumaris Castle or the Plas Newydd which is a beautiful elegant country house in Anglesey. The England tourist attractions also have outstretching beaches and bays clubbed with magnificent sceneries.

You must visit the city of **Bath** which is another major England Tourist Attractions. This is another large city after London but is much less crowded. It is renowned for its picturesque beauty. You must park your car and walk down the city to experience its beauty. There are loads of attractions to spot in Bath. Go to the Assembly Rooms on Bennett Street which now houses the Museum of costume. The Pump room in Stall Street is close to the Roman Baths. Many people come here for the hot spa water here. Also visit the Bath Abbey or the Roman Bath Museum and other galleries. This is one of the best England Tourist Destinations.

Lincoln houses some of the finest Cathedrals in the country of England while Norwich is the place which displays the medieval art and architectural forms in England. England Travels also encompass a tour of Southern England. Among the many tourist attractions in England, Southern England is the most beautiful of all. It is here that you can explore the beautiful countryside of England with the towns and villages. There are some exotic gardens and brilliant castles of the medieval and the modern era. This is a must-visit site. Come to Avebury or the Blenheim Palace, visit Broadway or Broughton Castle. There are several castles and gardens that are great tourist spots in the country. Henceforth make a trip to the several attractive tourist attractions in England and enjoy your vacations.

### Tourist Attractions in England - Questionnaire

Choose the correct answer according to the text:

- 1) Based on the first paragraph, the intention of the text is:
  - i. **To persuade the reader to visit England.**
  - ii. To present some information about England's tourist attractions.
  - iii. To give some options of tourist destinations in the world.
  - iv. None of them.
- 2) The term "picturesque sites" in the first paragraph means:
  - a) Folkloric cities.
  - b) Interesting spots.
  - c) **Colorful places.**
  - d) All of them.
- 3) Based on the second paragraph:
  - a) **You won't regret visiting London.**
  - b) London is good to visit but there are better options.
  - c) You can't only visit London but you have to visit other places.
  - d) London is the best option to visit in England.
- 4) The place that is prominent among the ones mentioned in the 3th paragraph is:
  - a) Isle of Bath.
  - b) Beaumaris Castle.
  - c) Plas Newydd country house.
  - d) **The Isle of Anglesey.**

- 5) The major touristic attraction in Bath is:
- a) To walk on the streets.
  - b) The assembly rooms.
  - c) **The roman baths.**
  - d) Bath Abbey.
- 6) According to the Last paragraph, two similar touristic destinations are:
- a) Lincoln and Norwich.
  - b) Lincoln and the Southern England.
  - c) **The southern England and Norwich.**
  - d) Avebury and Lincoln.

**Choose True (T) or False (F) or It doesn't say (DS) according to the text.**

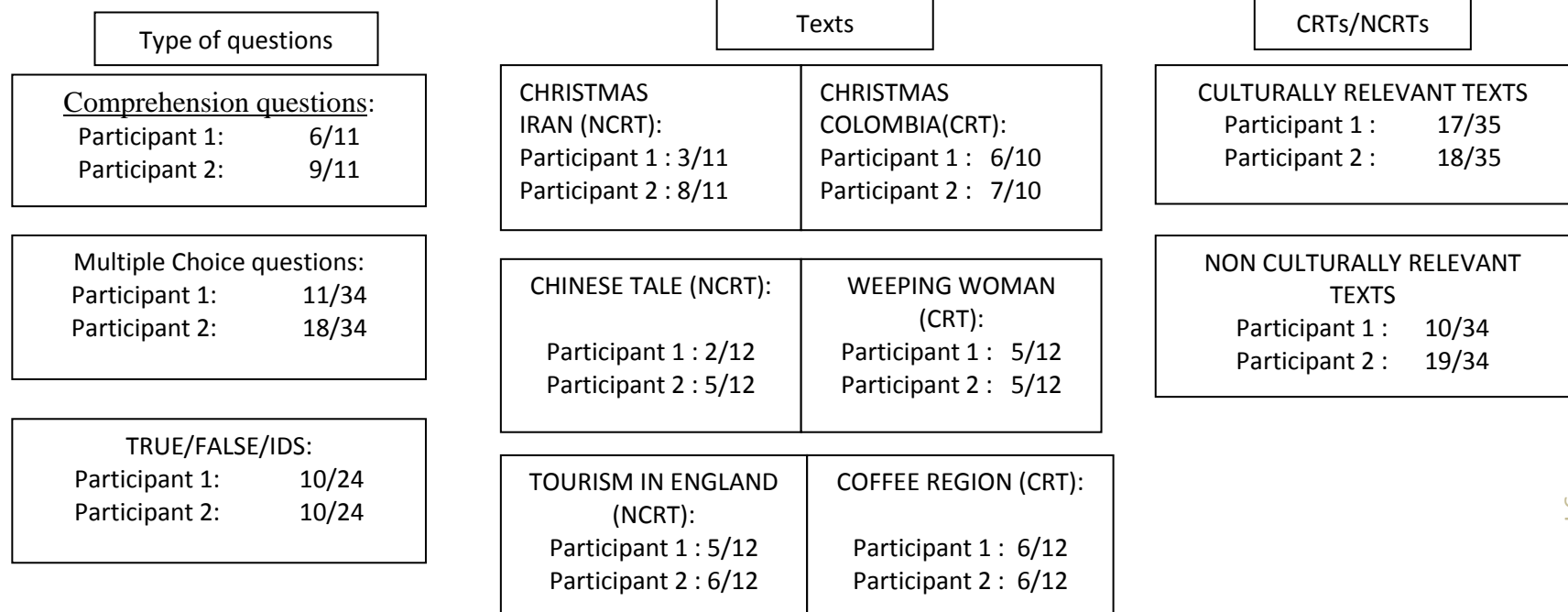
- 1) There are limited Tourist attractions in England to visit. T/F/DS
- 2) Tourist attractions in England are very expensive. T/F/DS
- 3) The city of Bath is an exceptional touristic destination in England. T/F/DS
- 4) One feature of the southern part of England is that is modern. T/F/DS
- 5) The southern part of England is the greenest of all touristic destinations. T/F/DS
- 6) The best cathedrals of the world are found in England. T/F/DS

PARTICIPANTS' RESULTS IN THE COMPREHENSION TESTS

TEXT	Eliana Correct answers/total of questions		Arturo Correct answers/total of questions	
	CHRISTMAS IN IRAN (NCRT)	Multiple choice questions	1/5	Multiple choice questions
<u>Comprehension questions</u>		2/6	<u>Comprehension questions</u>	5/6
CHRSTMAS IN COLOMBIA (CRT)	Multiple choice questions	2/5	Multiple choice questions	3/5
	<u>Comprehension questions</u>	4/5	<u>Comprehension questions</u>	4/5
CHINESE TALE (NCRT)	Multiple choice questions	0/6	Multiple choice questions	3/6
	True – False- IDS	2/6	True – False- IDS	2/6
WEEPING WOMAN (CRT)	Multiple choice questions	4/6	Multiple choice questions	4/6
	True – False- IDS	1/6	True – False- IDS	1/6
TOURISM IN ENGLAND (NCRT)	Multiple choice questions	1/6	Multiple choice questions	1/6
	True – False- IDS	4/6	True – False- IDS	5/6
COFFEE REGION (CRT)	Multiple choice questions	3/6	Multiple choice questions	4/6
	True – False- IDS	3/6	True – False- IDS	2/6

27/69

37/69



*Annex 2**Protocol for interviews***Protocolo de preguntas durante la sesión de lectura**

Guía de preguntas previas a la lectura:

1. ¿Qué puedes inferir del título que presenta el texto?
2. ¿Qué crees que representa la imagen o cómo puede estar relacionada con el contenido del texto?
3. ¿Conoces algo acerca del contenido del texto? (Después de la presentación inicial del texto)

Pregunta después de la lectura y solución de cuestionarios.

1. Después de haber leído ¿Puedes narrar lo que recuerdas de la lectura haciendo un resumen o un recuento?

**Protocolo para la entrevista**

Guía de preguntas para entrevista posterior a la sesión de lectura.

1. ¿Cómo te sentiste leyendo el texto? ¿Qué estuvo fácil o difícil acerca del texto? ¿Por que?
2. ¿Qué mecanismos usaste para leer y entender el texto?
3. ¿Hubo algo del texto, del contenido que te llamó la atención?
4. ¿Cómo te pareció el vocabulario del texto? ¿Por qué?
5. ¿Qué hacías para enfrentar el vocabulario desconocido del texto?
6. ¿Qué tipo de texto consideras que es este, en cuanto a la forma como estaba estructurado?
7. ¿En comparación con otros tipos de texto con los que hayas tenido contacto tanto en la universidad como en tu vida cotidiana, pero en inglés, que percepción te deja este texto?
8. ¿Qué importancia le das -a la falta de conocimiento-/-al hecho de conocer algo- acerca del contenido del texto para poder entenderlo?
9. ¿Cómo te sentiste contestando las preguntas, qué percepción te dejaron?
10. ¿Qué estrategias usabas específicamente para contestar las preguntas?