EXPLORING L1 READING PRACTICES OF 8 SIXTH GRADERS OF A LOW SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCHOOL IN PEREIRA

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RESUMEN

El presente proyecto de investigación tiene como objetivo principal explorar las características de la práctica lectora en L1 en el contexto familiar y escolar de adolescentes pertenecientes a una comunidad de nivel socio-económico bajo. De igual forma, el estudio se proyecta a contribuir en pro de la comprensión de las razones por las cuales los adolescentes leen, el rol mediador que juegan los padres y los profesores en la relación estudiante-lectura, y finalmente las percepciones y actitudes hacia la lectura que los alumnos a través de sus experiencias académicas y de vida en sociedad han podido construir. La investigación se realizó con la participación de ocho estudiantes de sexto grado y una docente del área de español de un colegio en zona urbana de la ciudad de Pereira, Colombia.

Los resultados de la presente investigación demuestran que los adolescentes de los hogares de nivel socioeconómico bajo sí poseen diversos materiales de lectura, sin embargo no son utilizados frecuentemente ni por los padres ni por los jóvenes. Esto se debe a la falta de autonomía de los estudiantes derivada de una falta de fomento a la lectura por parte de los padres además de una conexión del concepto de lectura plenamente ligada a labores puramente académicas. A pesar de la ausencia de modelos a seguir en relación a la lectura en el hogar, los padres proveen un soporte cuando sus hijos deben realizar lecturas imperativas de orden académico, el cual tiene como objetivo apoyar la comprensión de los textos con la finalidad de cumplir con un deber escolar. Por otra parte, el rol mediador del docente en las prácticas de lectura tiene como propósito construir un proceso de desarrollo de competencias lectoras bajo un modelo de tres componentes: comprensión, motivación y conocimiento de la lengua a través del estructuralismo lingüístico. Estos tres elementos fueron definidos como claves por el docente en relación a su concepto de buen lector, mientras los estudiantes tienden a inclinarse sólo hacia uno de estos elementos para conceptualizar el perfil de lector efectivo. Estas diferencias conceptuales a las cuales se han expuesto los estudiantes, han originado una definición de lectura que no es compartido por todos los participantes de la comunidad educativa. A pesar de la falta de autonomía hacia las prácticas lectoras por parte de los adolescentes debido al paradigma académico ligado a

las mismas, los estudiantes reconocen el valor de la competencia lectora para su supervivencia en los campos académicos y laborales.

En conclusión, se pretende proveer algunas recomendaciones que permitan la conversión del concepto de prácticas lectoras hacia una perspectiva más positiva. Lo anterior se debe realizar a través del fomento adecuado de las prácticas autónomas de lectura en el hogar, el ofrecimiento de textos que puedan llegar a despertar el interés de los estudiantes, y las sesiones libres de lectura sin la obligación de realizar resúmenes o reportes sobre el contenido de los textos.

El presente proyecto de investigación busca ser pionero en la exploración y el fomento de actividades de investigación de fenómenos en lengua materna, con la finalidad de proveer herramientas y comprensión de problemáticas que influencian profundamente en los procesos de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. Los potenciales fenómenos observables en procesos de desarrollo de lectura en lengua extranjera o segunda lengua tienen sus raíces en las habilidades y experiencias desplegadas por el lector en su lengua materna.

ABSTRACT

The present research project is intended to explore the characteristics of the L1 reading practices in which adolescents belonging to a low socioeconomic status community engage in their household and school context. The study also seeks to gain understating on the reasons that lead students to read, the mediating role of parents and teachers in the relationship between students-reading, and the adolescents´ perceptions towards reading. The study was conducted with the participation of eight sixth graders and a language arts teacher of a school in an urban zone in Pereira, the capital city of the department of Risaralda in Colombia.

The outcomes of the research evidence the existence of reading materials at home, but a scarce of parents and children´s autonomy to use them. This can be portrayed as a product of the lack of effective reading fostering at home and an avoidable link between reading and academic tasks in adolescents' minds. In spite of the lack of autonomy to read, the students are still pushed to engage in reading practices due to academic assignments. The parents do offer support in the comprehension of texts when their pupils are demanded to read. On the other hand the mediating role of the teacher in the development of adolescents as readers is based on a three-component model that entails: comprehension, motivation, and explicit linguistic structuralism. These elements were highlighted as the key characteristics of good readers by the language arts teacher, while the adolescents seem to incline just towards one of those features in order to conceptualize the profile of an effective reader. These conceptual differences have derived in different notions on what a good reader is. In spite of the lack of positive attitudes towards reading, students still

recognize the importance of reading for their current and future performance in academic and employment contexts.

In conclusion, the major implications of this study are projected to transform the concept of reading into a positive aspect in students' lives. This can be reached throughout the appropriate fostering of reading practices at home, the offering of texts that can potentially match students' interests, and the execution of free reading sessions that are not followed by an academic demand.

This project also seeks to be a pioneer on the exploration and the fostering of research of L1-related phenomena with the aim of understanding and providing tools regarding the problems that deeply influence the learning process of a foreign language. Specifically, the potential observable L2 reading deficiencies have their roots on the L1 background reading abilities and experiences possessed by the learner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"All things that are good and needed by human beings come in good time if one works for them. It may take several years' worth of hard work before one finally reaches some of these goals"

Daniel Stelter.

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1. Statement of the Problem

The international trend of education improvement has been showing important advances in terms of literacy rates for the last decades. A study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme in 2009, illustrates the general situation of countries in terms of literacy rates. The results demonstrated a close relation between literacy and socio economic development, ranking countries within three major conditions: Most of the countries in North America, Europe and Australia in the first places of the list with a rate up in the 97% of the adult population with basic reading- writing skills. The second segment of the ranking locates most of the nations in Latin America, and Asia with a rate of 90% to 97% of the adult population being basic literates, and the third group that involves mainly African countries, India, between others; as their literacy rate goes from 80% to 35%. The study was based on measuring functional literacy, a concept which deals with basic abilities in reading and writing that enables users to interact in a social context.

Internationally and locally the recognition of literacy skills as a means to enable users to develop knowledge and capability in any field of the world, has been increasing for the past decades. The concept of reading is highly valued as a key skill in order to succeed not only academically, but also socially. In 2011, 49 countries from all over the world participated in a major study known as Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) in which Colombia was part of it. The PIRLS assessed the reading capacity of fourth-graders in accordance to three criteria: Comprehension processes, reading purposes, and attitudes & behaviors towards reading scientific and literary texts. The study sought to measure the participants` reading proficiency at an average of 500 points. Advanced countries in terms of education such as Sweden, Canada and France ranked in the first places scoring above the average. Colombia was placed in the last group with a score of 448 points, closely followed by the other South American participant: Argentina. Such results have raised the Colombian public attention as the media has reported the problem as really severe; an approximate of 60 percent of 4th grade scholars is claimed to be unable to engage in effective comprehension processes (As reported in "El Tiempo"; 2013). As a response to the negative results described above, the Colombian government has adopted educational policies under the project named "Plan Nacional de lectura y escritura de Colombia" *"Colombian National reading and writing plan"* (2009) aiming at fostering

reading practices that will lead the population to become more democratic and participative citizens. According to the National Ministry of Education of Colombia, the reading practices of any kind increase the level of knowledge of people, deriving in a better coexistence in society as citizens are empowered with proper alternatives to participate democratically in the important decisions for the community.

It is also essential to describe some findings related to the general characteristics of the reading practices in Colombia. Rey (2007) in his study named "*To read a country*" portrays an overall view on the reading practices of the Colombian population. Regarding the diversity of the reading practices, Rey (2007) reports that there are several factors that control the variety of such reading activities. Under this perspective; gender, region, age, socioeconomic status, internet accessibility, among others, influence the differences when describing the reading quality. Within the study conducted by Rey (2007), the major evolution of the reading practices was portrayed under the current concept of the digitalization of the reading events. There was a marked tendency to move from written sources to digital supplies when talking about books. In spite of the changes due to the increasing access to internet, some traditional, culturally rooted reading practices remain as relevant and highly performed in Colombian household and academic contexts. Such practices belong to what is generally considered both enriching and negative reading experiences; for example, the mechanical grammar-oriented events usually evidenced in language art classes, keep being one of the major sources of reading skills development, leaving out modern approaches to reading that prioritize interpretation.

Finally, the outcomes of this study are expected to serve as a reference and set the foundations for future research on the field of understanding L1 reading in processes related to EFL teaching and learning.

1.2 Research questions:

- What are the characteristics of 6th graders' L1 reading practices at school and at home?

- What are the 6th graders' and the language arts teacher`s perceptions towards L1 readers and L1 reading practices?

1.3 General objective:

- To explore home and school reading practices performed by eight sixth graders belonging to a low socioeconomic status community from Pereira Colombia, taking into account the perceptions that the participants have constructed throughout their experiences as readers.

1.4 Specific objectives:

- To identify the reading events that take place within the household context of the participants, considering the reading resources and the presence or absence of reading support by relatives.

- To analyze the mediating role of the school connected to current students´ reading practices.

- To determine the reasons that lead students to engage in reading practices.

- To portray the participants´ willingness to read in order to identify their perceptions and attitudes.

2. Literature Review

Social Nature of Literacy

The role of "Assisted Performance" in the development of Literacy.

Children within social contexts are modeled through their immediate contact with the context and also with people who bring new experiences into the children's world. Those people who can be parents or teachers, become "assistants" in the cognitive skill construction of human beings in early ages, playing a crucial role in the cognitive performance of children. The general description made before is related to the concept called "Assisted performance" by Tharp and Gallimore (1988) which will be used in this document to specifically refer to children being cognitively supported in social contexts by more experienced and knowledgeable others.

Vygotsky (1978) also refers to the way learning takes place through the construction of meaning and understanding in social interaction. The experiences of the child in a context where more knowledgeable others exercise several socially rooted events, serves for the learner to start developing a sense on how his behavior should be. Another core element that has to be taken into account to describe the role of assisted performance in the development of literacy is awareness. Ochs (1982) portrays that even the deepest and more important assistance events that lead to the cognitive, psychological and social development of the child are done without consciousness. In other words, in most of the daily life situations the parents, relatives and home caretakers do not have a clear and beforehand planned intention to provide a straightforward assistance to the development of the child. Consequently, the role of the early age experiences at home cannot be underestimated, instead they must be thought of as highly relevant.

The Emergence of literacy

"Literacy emerges in the sense that a child gradually develops as a reader/writer in everyday activity settings" (Tharp and Gallimore, 1988). The authors describe the genesis of literacy in children as a process of interaction between the learners, the context and more knowledgeable people within sociocultural settings in spontaneous processes of everyday living. Some of the settings in which children get involved in literacy practices include

contexts related to domestic chores such as: reading and writing shopping lists, paying bills, making schedules, etc. Another daily setting that connects children with literacy practices is entertainment, which includes TV guides reading activities, games` rules reading, between others. The school setting also makes a contribution to the process of literacy exposure to children with specific homework activities and children´s games at school with classmates. There are several more contexts in which children start to get engaged to read and write including communication, religious activities and storybook practices.

It is vital to report Tharp and Gallimore (1988) to illustrate the fact that children are not equally exposed to literacy practices in terms of quality and quantity. Several factors affecting the children`s degree of engagement in literacy practices include socioeconomic status, social institutions impact (government, church, etc.), and culture. Teale (1986), Feitelson and Goldstein (1986), and Wells (1985) have studied the socioeconomic status impact on literacy practices regarding specific groups within the society. They found out that low income and minority families "are less likely to read to their children than are middle-class families and indeed are far less likely to create activity settings that engage their young children in other literary events. Yet individual families in all these groups do engage in some literacy-promoting events"

Literacy within Households

Spontaneous socio-related literacy practices.

"We were struck by the wide diversity of literacy which goes on in the home. There is much literacy, tied in with daily activities, beyond book reading. Often they combine many kinds of reading and writing, drawing upon spoken language, numeracy, and much more" (Barton and Hamilton, 1998, p. 149).

The author describes the diversity of literacy practices that can be found within households. Some of the activities described by Barton (1996) involve daily-life activities related to interaction with written or read text; such literacy contexts include actions regarding formal and informal literacy events. Some of the most common literacy practices carried out at home include diary writing, local newspaper reading, bible reading, writing

address lists, etc. Those practices vary in terms of specific cultural settings, family interests and traditions. (Barton and Padmore 1996, p.150)

Literacy research in Colombia

Literacy practices have been increasingly valued in Colombia as a means for academic success and cognitive development. One of the major studies regarding literacy in the country drives us to report that in a quantitative study by Universidad del Quindío (2008) with 3200 stories written by school and college students for a national annual writing contest in Colombia (Concurso Nacional del cuento), the researchers found that students read well, but they face many challenges at writing. One of the aspects that set major problems for students is getting to express their ideas effectively. The study discovered that students are able to construct simple phrases, but they lack writing skills regarding to the composition of complex sentences and building up paragraphs coherently and cohesively. This finding is relevant to the topic of this research because it offers a general view on the current state of literacy practices of students in Colombia. However, the study was only able to gain knowledge about the characteristics of the literacy practices of autonomous writers within a massive setting, lacking a close view related to the literacy practices that remain hidden within school and household contexts.

Cisneros (2005) conducted a study related to college students' literacy performance in a Colombian university. The study aimed at constructing a general conception on how freshmen perform in terms of literacy. The findings of the study diagnosed some of the general issues that influence the performance of students who enter the university, which involve learners' engagement towards reading, strategies and objectives in reading, challenges regarding argumentative writing, between others. A total of 1417 college students participated in the implementation of a questionnaire in which open ended questions were asked. The second stage of the test proposed the writing of a new text that could explain what they have read. The outcomes of this study evidenced that a high percentage of freshmen make use of paraphrasing and literal copy when being required to answer questions and write texts that demanded an inference process.

These two research studies portray an overall view on the situation of the literacy development processes that take place throughout the elementary, middle and high school levels. It is evident that stronger efforts need to be made to explore the roots of the negative aspects that arise from classrooms in Colombian public schools in order to build and implement effective strategies that enhance the literacy levels of students.

Understanding Reading

Many concepts have been constructed to appropriately define the process of reading; however, two main ideas will be addressed during this section. First, we intend to summarize the concept of reading as process of meaning construction through the interaction of the read text and the background knowledge, culture, and experience possessed by the reader. In accordance to the concept above, Smith (2004) described that effective reading processes only take place when the reader is knowledgeable in the topic; otherwise, the reading process lacks of sense and the meaning construction process is nonexistent. In agreement with the nature of the reading process as a reader giving procedure, Dubois (1996) adds that the readers are not defenseless anymore against the written text; as a matter of fact, the major role in reading is played by the reader who brings a whole world into the text, making the interpretation infinite.

The second conception of reading first established by Rosenblatt in (1978) depicts the reading process as transactional. At this point, the author illustrated that within the reading events there is a transaction between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt (1985) illustrates how the reader´s emotions, culture, and knowledge are essential to comprehension, while at the same time the text offers new information and experiences for a person to be conceived as a reader. Under this conception the text itself is considered a senseless source and a readers are not considered so until the transaction occurs.

The two ideas portrayed above are highly relevant as there is a vital need to illustrate how apprentices interact with texts; and how the reading events may either enhance or obstruct their ongoing process as readers.

The concept of Reading in relation to society.

Several concepts have been drawn to highlight the importance of reading to not only succeed academically but also socially. Petit (2007) upholds that reading is a vital tool in order to access information which eventually has a deep impact in the formation of the critical perception of the human beings and therefore, the construction of a personal character. In response to this assertion, most countries around the world have implemented reading fostering projects as a means to not only increase the reading rates of their communities, but most importantly offer opportunities for the citizens to develop personally. An avid reader besides being viewed as a potentially informed person is seen as a citizen who can actively participate appropriately in the important decisions of a country (Petit, 2007). According to the Colombian national Ministry of Education (2006) "Reading has positive effects in the national coexistence, as it stimulates the participation in the democratic and social life of the country".

Adolescents and Teacher´s Perceptions on What a Good Reader is.

Several authors have concentrated on exploring how students, teachers, and other professionals within the field of pedagogy have constructed the concept of a good reader.

For instance, under Niles´s (2010) concept of good reader, quite a number of procedures connected to thinking, wondering, and predicting are set. The author´s list of what good readers do includes several actions through which comprehension can be widely enhanced; to illustrate, asking questions, summarizing, drawing, and predicting among others. This author is clearly driven by approaches to reading that characterize good reading practices as processes where the reader is not only a receiver, but most importantly a main character within the reading events that possesses information and thinking skills to make an own sense of what is read. Garrido (2004) provides an additional thought to support this theory through describing the way we read. Garrido (2004) expresses that we read with our experience, prejudices, own worldviews and thoughts, which are the aspects that make comprehension possible.

A second overview of a good reader is also provided by Garrido (2004) who asserts that high-quality readers engage in such practices autonomously and as a habitual activity.

Garrido (2004) expresses that the natural frequency of the reading events occurs when a language user has achieved the level of enjoying reading. The author asserts that "As long as we do not leave the fear for pleasure in the classroom and accept that reading must be a joyful activity, we will not be able to form the readers we need" (Garrido; 2004. PP. 27). This author proposes a change in the way reading practices are encouraged in schools. Garrido pinpoints that good readers are not necessarily the ones who have achieved proficiency as fluent readers under mechanical instruction; but the ones who have been empowered with comprehension and enjoyment tools to engage in effective reading practices.

Third, it is vital to report some research based literature regarding the way adolescents perceive good readers. Argote and Molina (2010) explored the figure of good readers according to students, which resulted in a higher tendency towards the enjoyment to read, then comprehension. Argote and Molina (2010) report that in spite of the link between reading and academic demands, students acknowledge the enjoyment towards reading as the most important attitude a good reader must have.

School Reading Practices and Their Mediating Role in the Adolescents´ Perceptions towards Reading

Ferreiro (1999) avows that "decoding" as a mental skill, empowers the kids in early stages of their learning process to be able to communicate through written text, therefore deriving in a further enjoyment for the reading practices. As a matter of fact, in Colombian schools, learning how to read at a basic level is perhaps the most valued and important standard in primary schools. Argoteand Molina (2010) describe how the mediating role of the school in the early age literacy development process can do both, facilitate or obstruct the process. Lahire (2000) suggests that language arts teachers at schools "should understand that there is not a single kind of reading, nor a single way of reading". Lahire criticizes the way language arts teachers conceive and foster the development of reading skills under a merely structural concept. The author pinpoints that most of the teachers perceive the language as an engine which has to be disarmed and their parts carefully studied and understood. Argote and Molina (2010) assert that the language arts classes are

generally conducted under the linguistic structural concept, an approach that is difficultly linked to the enjoyment towards reading. The authors of the study reported above, also found that the schools foster reading practices, but the fostering of the motivation to read is not prioritized anymore.

In addition to this, Levy (2009) explains that reading practices which are implemented at schools deeply influence how students perceive reading in other contexts. Students have internalized a model of reading related to academic responsibilities. For that reason, students conceive reading as a practice exclusively associated to homework. This model is rejected by students, as a high percentage of adolescents are not eager to fulfill the obligations arising from the school with a positive attitude, thus lowering the quality of the work they do.

Argote and Molina (2010) found that the reading practices do not necessarily seem to be interesting for pre-adolescents and adolescents, due to the fact that the reading events, in which they usually get involved in, are most of the times linked to activities that are mandatory within their academic context. According to the authors, students within the age range of 10 to 15 engage in reading practices in order to accomplish academic demands; which derive in a direct affectation of students´ willingness. Students, who are required to read without being taken their interests or opinions, respond negatively when being demanded to read as an obligation. On the other hand, Argote and Molina (2010) suggest that students generally evidence that there is a low enjoyment to read. In spite of this, they consider that reading is an important activity in order to increase vocabulary, improve comprehension, pronunciation, and spelling. Students conceive these skills as highly important for their further academic development and current academic success.

The mediating role of the household context in the reading practices of pre-adolescents and adolescents

Bourdieu (2003) highlights that the practices and orientations occurring at home are very important, as the close relatives and the material usually existent in houses possess the power to not only offer support for understanding, but to provide enough reading sources that could potentially match the interests of the adolescents as well. Moreover, parents and

caretakers give positive role models that implicitly foster reading practices, just by engaging in any kind of reading.

In spite of the orientation, support and resources at home have positive effects and boost the possibilities for students to engage in reading practices and therefore to improve their cognitive and academic level; home reading practices may also be negative. The problematic aspects arise when the home reading practices reproduce the model from schools, in other words, parents who force their children to read without taking into account their opinions, willingness and interests, are just contributing to the negative attitudes of students towards reading. (Argote and Molina; 2010)

3. Methodology

3.1 Type of Study

This project was conducted under the foundations of qualitative research in order to explore appropriately the characteristics of home and school reading practices and how adolescents perceived L1 reading. In order to reach this aim, interviews, observations, and field notes were used as data collection methods. More specifically, we conducted a qualitative Descriptive-Interpretive case study which has been described by Stake (1995) and Merriam (1998) as a research approach where phenomena are explored in small groups or communities taking into account developmental factors in relation to the context. We adopted this approach as our focal participants were 8 sixth graders and a language arts teacher that represent the context of a low income community. The use of the methods for data collection involved a descriptive process through which the events connected to reading practices were thoroughly described and later analyzed and interpreted.

3.2 Context

The study was conducted in the Francisco Jose Zia School, a public institution built under the concept of Mega Schools. It is located in a recently built neighborhood, where vulnerable families, due to the dangerous characteristics of the terrain, and governmental house construction beneficiaries form other areas in the town were relocated. The mainstream socioeconomic status of the community is low and the school is intended to offer a wide variety of services for students and families in general, in order to ensure their integral development. The educative levels offered are transition to eleventh grade; however health insurance, food, sexual orientation, psychological orientation are provided as well. The academic level of the school can be drawn through the results in Saber 11 exams. Such participation has located the school in a low academic level. The School is administrated under the model of concession and has contractual duties to be bilingual. The institution has offered its services for three years and currently there is an agreement with a local English teaching university program to progressively transform the curriculum into bilingual. The school is located in a semi- urban area of Pereira, the capital town of the

department of Risaralda in Colombia. The institution covers most of the students in the zone with an active population of approximately one thousand five hundred students in elementary, middle, and high school grades. In terms of human resources, the school has approximately 30 teachers for elementary education, 42 teachers for middle and high school, and 5 managing staff. Concerning the school facilities, the institution has 38 classrooms, 2 computer rooms, a library and 18 toilet units.

3.3 Participants

The participants were 8 sixth graders and the language arts teacher. The eight randomly chosen students' age was between 11 to 15 years old. The participants and their parents were informed through a consent letter about the objectives and the whole scope of the study, to which they allowed their children to be part of the project. (Appendix A)

The 6th grade was chosen as it offered major accessibility to engage in participant observation processes. By the time data was collected, the sixth graders` age range was suitable for the overall aims of the project as the average age was 13. The language arts teacher was chosen to be a key participant in our study as she was the person who encouraged students the most to get involved in reading practices at school. The language arts teacher possesses a bachelor`s degree in Spanish and literature and has been facilitating the language arts subject for seven years. The sixth graders were exposed to six hours of Language arts weekly.

3.4 Methods for Data Collection

Observations: "Observational data represents a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest in a natural setting" (Merriam, 1998, p. 94). With the deliberated aim to gather meaningful information, a total of 4 non-participant observations in the language arts class lasting one and a half hours each were conducted. The language arts class was chosen because it offered the specific context in which students followed a systematic process of Reading development activities. The general focus of the observations was to identify events regarding motivation and characteristics of the reading practices occurring within classrooms. An observation format was used (Appendix B). After each observation, an expansion and further clarification of the data gathered was done.

Interviews: McNamara (1999) asserts that interviews in qualitative research are useful to gather meaningful information on the opinions and experiences of participants within a certain topic of interest. Under this conception we intended to collect in-depth information through the interviews with the intention of getting to know the background reading experiences of our focal participants; as well as the perceptions they had internalized during their life as readers.

We conducted interviews with the students and the language arts teacher.

- Students` interview: We interviewed the eight focal participants. The interviews with the students had the purpose of collecting information about their perception towards reading and writing, the kinds of literacy practices in their lives, and their memories as literate beings. The interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes with each student. The questions in this section sought to define the students` perceptions about literacy, and also to enrich the overall description of the literacy practices at school and at home. The participating students were interviewed once at the beginning of the study. (Appendix C)

    Examples of the interview questions included:

    ¿Le gusta leer? ¿Qué tipo de cosas lee? (revistas, periódicos, cuentos)

    ¿Cómo definiría la acción de leer/ escribir?

- Language arts teacher interview: The second interview session was conducted with the language arts teacher. The purpose of interviewing the teacher was to discover the general importance given to literacy in the language arts class. The interview aimed at collecting information about frequency, type, and teacher perception and students` perceived behaviors and attitudes towards literacy in the classroom. (Appendix D)

    Examples of questions:

    ¿Fomenta usted hábitos de lectoescritura con sus alumnos?

Cuéntenos de las actividades de lectoescritura con sus alumnos en su clase. ¿Cómo son? ¿Qué hacen los estudiantes?

¿Qué propuestas reciben de usted los estudiantes para desarrollar habilidades de lectoescritura?

¿Cuáles son las actividades de lectoescritura preferidas por sus alumnos?

All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Field Notes: Mulhall (2003) emphasizes on the importance of field notes in qualitative research. The author divides the two core elements of the word itself and asserts that "The field represents a natural entity, out there, which needs to be objectively described by the observer" (Mulhall, 2003, p. 310). On the other hand, notes are defined as written pieces of data that encompass the events that occur within the observed context. Under this conception, the reading related events were thoroughly described and expanded. The researcher´s interpretation of those events was also included within the field notes. Under these conceptions, specific reading-related events` field notes were gathered and transcribed for analysis. (Appendix E)

3.5 Researchers´ Roles

Our roles in the study were varied. First, one of us engaged in observation sessions within the school context. The Language arts teacher became our participant ally in order to construct confidence between the students and the researchers. The reason that we lied on to be observers is that under such status we were able to access a natural environment and observe meaningful real events. Another role we embodied was that of context accessibility arrangers, through clear explanations about our intention with the study, information about our academic representation, and correctness. A final key role we played is listeners and guides. The added requests in the interviews were open ended questions and statements in order to elicit as much information from the participants as possible.

3.6 Ethical considerations

In order to take into account the necessary ethical aspects for this research project, the parents of the under-age participants were informed about the participation of students.

The parents and the adolescents approved their participation in the research through a consent letter which explains the overall nature and purpose of the study. (Appendix A) The procedures for the interviews and observations were also clarified. Aditionally, data collected from participants was coded under the use of pseudonyms to protect their identity and privacy.

4. Findings

4.1 Regardless of the mediating role of school and home reading practices, autonomy to read is barely existent.

Data portrays that neither implicit nor explicit fostering strategies to read have derived in the autonomous use of reading resources due to the academic demands linked to reading activities and non-academic habits adolescents are used to perform.

4.1.1 In spite of the high availability of reading materials, adolescent students lack of autonomy to use them.

Data suggests that the participants are generally surrounded by reading resources of varied genres and forms. Within their home contexts, our focal sixth grade participants have reading materials such as: newspapers, books, magazines, and bibles. The adolescent participants within the present study have the possibility to access several sources of reading at school as well. Students do engage in reading practices at school; however, some of our focal participants were not often eager to engage autonomously in the activities proposed by the teacher and the librarian.

Within the interviews, several participants affirm to have a variety of reading materials at home:

Sample # 1 from JCT´s interview:

JCT: "Sí, en mi casa hay un poco de libros y una biblia grande"

Sample # 2 from YVG´s interview:

YVG: "En mi casa compran el periódico casi todos los días, ah también hay libros"

The existence of reading materials was evidenced by students within their household context. After an observation of the school facilities, we could also gather data connected to the presence and availability of a large amount of reading materials of varied topics, genres and sizes. Data from the field notes evidence the availability of materials to

read and the access to an appropriate place that offers a quiet and comfortable space for reading:

Sample # 3 from Researcher field notes:

"The school has a library with 7 racks that contain approximately 150 books each..."

"… The library is open for all students during the break that lasts 30 minutes…"

Data shows how our focal participants are actually surrounded by reading materials of varied kinds. The low economic community households of our participants offer a series of reading materials that represent a part of their cultural roots and current lifestyle. At school, the students have the possibility to read for pleasure, entertainment or information. The administrative staff of the school seems to recognize the importance of reading as they offer a wide variety of reading materials that is expected to call the attention of the students and they also offer the school population with an appropriate place to read. However, some of the participants´ first reactions to the concept of the library, addressed activities different from reading.

Sample #4 from MB´s Interview:

I: ¿Qué tipo de actividades realizan en la biblioteca?

MB: "Cuando voy a la biblioteca voy es a jugar ajedrez más que todo jaja"

It is vital to go beyond and insist in the fact that exposure and accessibility to reading materials did not necessarily derive in the execution of reading activities by students, as within the age range of the pre-adolescents and adolescents there are plenty of activities that they seem to prefer. Some of those activities included, sports, table games, drawing, internet, television, and listening to music just to name a few. These are highly preferred over reading by adolescents. Still, students do engage in reading practices mainly driven by academic demands. An exploration on the reasons that lead them to engage in reading practices confirmed the link between the concepts of reading and assignments.

Sample # 5 from MB´s Interview:

I: "Cuando lees por qué lo haces?"

MB: "Porque me toca, para hacer tareas o talleres o así"

Most of the participants aligned with the idea related to why they read. The answers were closely related to fulfilling academic demands. The opinions given by the adolescents reveal a scarce of intrinsic motivation to read.

Bourdieu (2003) declares that pre-adolescents and adolescents are usually surrounded by reading resources of varied types that could potentially match the interests of students. The author portrays how the existence of varied reading materials can contribute to the engagement of adolescents in spontaneous reading practices. The exploration of the existence of reading materials in the low-socioeconomic context provided great insight to affirm that regardless the socioeconomic status, the urban lifestyle has ensured the presence of varied reading materials. These resources are present in homes usually in the form of newspapers and books, and in schools in larger amounts of the same with more varied genres and topics. The result of this finding in relation to the presence of reading resources aligns with the proposal by Bourdieu (2003) in the sense that household contexts do possess reading resources; however it is fundamental to examine the power of those materials in order to call the attention of the adolescents. At this point, Levy (2009) explains how the interaction between readers and materials is highly influenced by academic demands. Levy (2009) explains how young students have associated reading to homework. The participants of our study do use reading materials mainly for consulting information for fulfilling assignments. There seems to be a disconnection between reading and free choice activities. In conclusion, when adolescents have the opportunity to choose within a series of activities in which reading is included, they seem to prefer others. Levy (2009) agrees with our result on the fact that the use of reading materials is generally linked to academic demands. The only existence of reading materials is not enough to make students engage in reading activities on their own.

4.1.2 The potential positive reactions of implicit and explicit motivational strategies towards reading are obstructed by lack of frequency and academic demands.

First, we intend to address the characteristics of one of the observed implicit reading fostering strategy: Reading role models. It is essential to report that even though the pre-adolescent and adolescent participants belonging to low socio economic status communities have reading role models at home, such models are not frequently observed and therefore they lack effectiveness. As expected, the members of the participants´ nuclear family do engage in reading practices mainly for information in newspapers or religious practices of bible reading; however, pre-adolescents and adolescents report that such practices do not occur habitually. The implicit motivation through reading role models at home does not provoke a positive reaction in the adolescents.

A number of participants within the interview reported that the reading materials were barely used. For instance, participant YVG declares that the reading resources are used at home, but she emphasizes on the frequency of those events as follows:

Sample # 6 from YVG´s interview:

"En mi casa hay periódicos, revistas y libros que los utilizan mi mamá, mi papá, y mi hermano muy de vez en cuando"

As reported by adolescents, the reading events that take place within their household context can be perceived as rare. Parents and other elder relatives do not seem to recognize the importance of their figure as role models to inspire reading habits at home. This whole phenomenon is usually observed in low income communities where little interest is given to reading. Within low socioeconomic status communities, families are not truly aware of the importance of providing effective reading role models which should include good quality reading materials and frequent spontaneous reading practices. The developmental process of the participants as readers in their childhood was not appropriately conducted and the negative results can be currently observed.

On the other hand, we aim to portray the motivational strategies that take place within the language arts classes at school. Implicit fostering of reading include mainly the offer of reading materials that might potentially match students´ interests, while explicit strategies can be portrayed as an straightforward verbal invitation to read. Those strategies are implemented in the classroom and the library, and seem to call the attention of the adolescents.

The following sample describes the type of book he was given and the participant´s perception of the book:

Sample # 7 from EJR´s interview:

EJR: *"Nosotros leemos en la clase de español. Por ejemplo hay veces me leo unos cuentos que tratan sobre unos animales que digamos a uno se le pierde la mama y llega otro animal y le ayuda a encontrarla, esos cuentos son buenos y corticos"*

This particular student is positively impacted by the strategy implemented by the teacher which involved an interesting topic and an appropriate size of the book. Additionally, another event that evidenced the overall growth of students´ interest took place when the teacher brought several books into the classroom for a free reading session.

In advance, the teacher reported that this was a free reading session where students were already assigned books. The teacher put the books on her desk and most students proved to be eager to read by their reaction:

Sample # 8 from Classroom observation 3B:

"Students *seem to be eager to start reading and they literally surround the teacher´s desk… YVG, AML and other students seem to be really interested in some books as the teacher reads some of the titles… Cupido es un murciélago…"*

The excerpt above evidences that the teacher of the language arts class provides students with appropriate reading materials that are interesting and suitable for students' age and motivation. The reading practices under these strategies are also regularly followed by academic demands such as oral reports and summaries. Participant EJR, in the excerpt bellow, tells that almost all of the instances the reading in class or at the library includes a follow-up activity.

Sample # 9 from EJR´s interview:

I: *Después de leer esos cuentos que los ponen a hacer?*

EJR: *"Casi siempre escribir resumen de lo que entendimos en nuestras propias palabras"*

The teacher includes a follow-up activity in order to persuade students to read. The teacher seeks to make sure that most of the students engage in the reading activity by requiring a further activity that is not doable without having read. It is not only true that students' reading in and out of class is reinforced by an activity that serves different purposes, but also that students seem to be negatively influenced by this follow-up activity and that their motivation decreases substantially. This reduction in the level of motivation was evident during a classroom observation within a free- reading session, where participant DT showed clear attitudes of engagement, but a negative reaction to the follow-up activity he was reminded to fulfill:

Sample # 10 from Classroom observation 3B:

"Participant DT is concentrated on the reading session. He reads non-stop for more than 20 minutes. DT asks the teacher for the meaning of an unknown word: Qué es un kiwi? Teacher gives him some hint until he finally gets the meaning of the word: DT ,Ah es una fruta verde como peludita! When it is 40 minutes to finish the class the teacher reminds that a summary of what they were reading must be done. When it is 10 to finish the class, DT has not written anything on his notebook. Instead, DT

is now watching his cellphone and relaxing. When the class finishes, DT is one of the first people to pack and leave the classroom.'' (Classroom observation 3B)

The student was concentrated on the reading activity which he seemed to enjoy. Participant DT showed clear behaviors of interest towards the reading, but a lowering of such level of motivation after he was demanded to write the summary. DT was eager to read and make questions about vocabulary which demonstrate an actual engagement within the activity which was obstructed right after the teacher reminded the students to write a summary. During the observation, not only a generalized level of interest towards some attention calling books was identified, but also a certain level of reluctance to perform writing activities in relation to reading sessions was detected.

Regarding the first outcome of this finding, different authors have addressed the phenomenon related to how the socioeconomic status of a given community influences its habits in relation to reading practices. For instance, Powell (1994) declares that in general, parents who are within a superior socioeconomic level have better education; therefore, they are more interested in reading than parents in other socioeconomic statuses. Powell (1994) also asserts that it is likely for parents who are interested in reading to provide better material to their children. The pre-adolescents and adolescents, who were interviewed, declared that reading is not one of the usual activities that their parents performed at home. Instead, the teenagers argue that the elder relatives within their family prefer to spend their free time in activities different to reading which seems to be the role model accepted and adopted by the adolescents. This outcome confirms Powell´s notion when describing the low or even non-existent level of interest towards reading in relation to low socio economic status communities.

In terms of the second idea related to the obstructive influence of academic demands within the reading activities, Argote and Molina (2010) assert that teenagers´ willingness and motivation towards reading is often negatively affected by the perception of academic demand which is generally involved within further tasks after reading sessions. Even though our adolescent participants´ interests were taken into account, the level of motivation was substantially lowered by the mandatory assignment. Under these events,

students´ aims are basically transferred to achieving a passing grade. The outcomes of this study align with Argote and Molina´s (2010) study in the sense that the use of appropriate materials has the power to potentially encourage students´ interest towards reading; however, the academic demand usually linked to such practices affects the motivation of students.

4.2 The language arts teacher aims to build reading skills through fostering a three-component model: comprehension, motivation, and linguistic knowledge.

The language arts teacher asserts that within his lessons and under the policies of the National Ministry of Education, reading competences were prioritized as they build the structure for the development of further academic skills and consequently the increasing of the students´ academic performance. The language arts teacher aims to build reading competences through planning and implementing lessons that include the three elements that she believes will build appropriate reading skills: development of comprehension skills, the growth of the interest to read, and knowledge on the structure of the language (Lahire; 2000). This later term, linguistic structuralism, is described by the Lahire (2000) as an approach to reading through which the language is seen as an engine, and its parts carefully studied and understood. The teacher's instruction, monitoring, and exemplification during reading tasks generally involves knowledge connected to the lexical function of words, comprehension hints to help students understand the read text and explicit or implicit fostering of reading motivation.

In the following excerpt, the teacher evidences the two aims of this specific lesson: Reading comprehension and students´ motivation.

Sample #11 from Classroom Observation 1:

"The teacher brings mid-size books for all the students. Some of the titles seem to be interesting for students and they try to choose books that capture their attention. The teacher asks them to read silently for some minutes. After the students have been reading for approximately eleven minutes the teacher stops the activity and calls all students´ attention. She chooses some students randomly to read out loud a

paragraph of their books. ALI is asked to read out loud… After he ends reading, he is asked the question "¿Usted qué entendió? To what he answered, "Es una historia de un abogado que está intentando sacar una persona de la carcel y ahí voy"

The titles of the books provoke a positive reaction from the students, which reveals a careful choosing of the reading materials by the teacher. The students` interests are clearly taken into account, and the length of the focusing period evidences an actual engagement within the reading activity. Still, the teacher proved to have two aims in this activity. She did not only manage to provide proper materials to enhance students´ motivation, but she also aimed at eliciting evidence of comprehension from the readers. In addition to reading motivation and comprehension, a third purpose related to the enhancement of the knowledge regarding the structure of the language also emerged within the interviews:

Participant MG provided insightful information related to the presence of linguistic structuralism in relation to reading:

Sample # 12 from MG`s interview:

I: ¿Alguna de estas palabras le suena conocida: Verbo, artículo, adjetivo, adverbio?

MG: Si, más que todo los verbos.

I: Y ¿por qué te suena conocida?

MG: a veces en clase de Español sacamos frases de libros y llenamos unos cuadros ahí con los verbos y si esta en pasado o en presente y esas cosas.

Data suggests that the participant teacher is still partially driven by an approach to reading that includes linguistic structuralism. The knowledge of several concepts still tends to be a relevant learning objective when it comes to developing appropriate reading skills.

The theoretical framework in relation to how language arts teachers approach learning to read, offers several references to discuss this aspect. For example, Lahire (2000) affirms that language arts teachers´ conceive reading under a single structural approach where knowledge on the parts that compose a given language are examined. Under this approach, the familiarity with concepts such as verbs, adjectives, nouns, etc. is expected to enhance the development of reading skills. The outcomes of our study propose that even though the language arts teacher keeps relating reading practices to structuralism, she also has a wide variety of aims that are expected to boost the overall process of reading development. The lesson activities proposed by the participant teacher in class also aimed to increase motivation and comprehension. This event reveals an evolution to reading approaches that prioritize motivation as the path for comprehension and enjoyment. Evidence gathered in this study contrasts with Lahire´s (2000) as our participant teacher proved to include a wide variety of aims and not only an encouragement on the structure of the language.

4.3 There is not a consensus regarding the perception of what a good reader is.

Data advocates that there is not a generalized opinion regarding the concept of good reader. The participants of the study provided a diversity of answers which can be categorized under four main concepts: fluent reading, comprehension, autonomy, and enjoyment. The teacher´s concept of a good reader entails the three aspects described before, while students seem to incline towards just one of them.

First, it is vital to describe the perception of the language arts facilitator who expressed that a good reader is a person who possesses a certain package of abilities to ensure not only comprehension, fluency, and autonomy, but enjoyment as well. Data sample below portrays the concept of the good reader by the teacher:

Sample #13 from Language arts teacher´s interview:

The language arts teacher described the good reader under three main concepts as follows:

"Un buen lector es aquel que toma un texto sin que le digan y se sienta simplemente a disfrutarlo, sin que se vea obligado por una tarea. El buen lector también lee varias veces hasta que entiende y también es capaz de transmitir a través de su voz."

The order of ideas within the teacher´s interview turns out to be highly insightful as the participant first addresses the concept of reading autonomy as the prime value a good reader must have. The teacher also emphasizes on the fact that ideal reading practices must not be triggered by academic demands and should always involve enjoyment.   Data also suggests that the teacher is aware of the fact that readers usually face potentially confusing texts which can be overcome through a re-reading process until comprehension occurs. By "transmitting through his voice" the teacher might have intended to address the concept of a fluent reader which still seems to be an important aim. In spite of the diversity of abilities described by the teacher to illustrate the image of a good reader, the transmission of such image as a whole does not seem to have been effective into adolescents' images of good readers. Instead, students´ opinions are divided and they incline towards the recognition of only one of the abilities described by the teacher.

Some adolescents reported that under their perception, a good reader is a fluent reader who is a language user that during out loud reading interventions is able to read out loud with the proper intonation, pace, and speed. Within classes students are often randomly chosen to make short interventions of out loud reading for the whole class. Some students agreed on their opinion regarding the ability to read harmoniously; for instance, participant MB provided an insightful answer connected to his concept of a good reader as follows:

Sample #14 from MB´s Interview:

"I: Para usted qué es leer, ¿qué es ser buen lector?

"MB: Para mí una persona que sabe leer, lee de seguido y no se equivoca tanto."

From this sample it can be inferred that these students intend to maintain a positive academic image throughout effective reading out loud interventions. They still seem to relate the concept of effective reading to the fluent reading skills that usually take place during the early development of children as readers in primary school. These early stages as readers are characterized by habitual out loud reading sessions by teachers where a careful reading role modeling of proper intonation, pace, rhythm and pauses takes place. At the current stage students are seldom modeled on fluent reading and also demanded to read out loud for the whole class. These interventions seem to increase the competitive attitudes as the fluent readers are often acknowledged as academically outstanding students.

On the other hand, a number of participants within this study connect the concept of good readers to the perception of reading comprehension. Classroom reading sessions usually involve a given sort of comprehension activity that serves the purpose of assessing the actual comprehension of students. A number of students evidenced a common agreement when being asked for their concept of a good reader; just to exemplify, participant ALI exposed his opinion in the excerpt below:

Sample #15 from ALI´s interview:

Interviewer: Para usted qué es ser un buen lector?

ALI: Comprender lo que uno lee y hacer un resumen.

Led by the sample above, it can be interpreted that the teacher´s encouragement of comprehension activities has been positively adopted by students as they recognize the main role played by comprehension within reading. For these students, abilities such as summarizing and paraphrasing are the most valuable signals of effective readers.

Quite a number of authors have researched how teachers and students visualize good readers. Nile (2010) proposes a set of actions through which an effective reader can ensure comprehension. The author is clearly single-minded towards the concept of comprehension which aligns with the group of students within our study who recognize comprehension as the prime ability a good reader must have. A much wider view is

proposed by Garrido (2004) who asserts that besides comprehension, a good reader must have an autonomous and a joyful sense towards reading practices.

Garrido (2004) also proposes that even though fluent reading remains as an important ability to describe effective readers, a much stronger effort should be given to building autonomous reading which is expected to naturally derive in comprehension. The language arts teacher of our study proved to connect good readers to four main concepts: autonomy, enjoyment, comprehension, and fluent reading. Both Garrido´s (2004) and the participant teacher´s views converge in the sense that the two of them tend to prioritize the sense of the enjoyment towards reading and reading autonomy as the vital aspects a good reader must have in addition to fluent reading and comprehension.

Argote and Molina (2010) focused on exploring the adolescents' perception of a good reader. The results of their study showed a surprising adolescents' tendency to recognize the enjoyment to read as the most important attitude good readers have. The outcomes of our study show that adolescents distinguish a single ability: comprehension or fluent reading, when describing good readers. The adolescents´ view of a good reader within our study contrasts with the one found in Argote and Molina's (2010) study, as no connection between good reader and enjoyment proved to occur within our study.

5. Research and Pedagogical Implications

Based on the findings that emerged during the data collection and the analysis process, several recommendations in relation to the mediating role of school and home towards the development of children as readers can be made.

First, it is important to address the role of the school context as it is the place in which students are most encouraged to read in low socioeconomic contexts. Taking into account the fact that the school plays a major role in the development of children as readers, teachers need to transform their vision connected to how reading practices are encouraged. Such conversion implies first efforts to change the overall perception of students towards education. Students need to learn and understand that the education deals with the support towards the appropriate growth of human beings, and not simply with the completion of due tasks and the achievement of passing grades. Specifically addressing the core concept of this study, reading activities in academic contexts need to meet the necessities and learning profiles that match not only the cognitive development process, but also the motivation of adolescents with the aim of building reading autonomy. Freely chosen books and time devoted to leisure reading activities that are not followed by the mandatory writing of a summary, are highly recommended. Some other aspects that escape from the objectives of the present study relate to the effectiveness and the quality of the reading events in relation to time and the environment (these are set under further research).

On the other hand, the mediating role of the household context also needs to be addressed as it provides the first steps in reading; thus, it possesses the power to build a perception on children`s minds that can be both positive or negative. The positive aspects connected to the mediating role of the household setting in terms of reading can be set under two major topics: the existence of reading materials and the conscious and/or unconscious fostering to read.

Taking into account these two aspects, some relevant suggestion for practice can be made. As a starting point, the role of the household context cannot be underestimated as it offers the first approach to reading in early age stages of the lives of Colombian children. In

that way, the low socio-economic status contexts parents and home caretakers need to be educated on the importance of proper early age stimulus strategies towards reading that foster the pleasure to read instead of building a reproduction of the academic image in children´s minds which is widely rejected.

As it was evidenced in this study, home contexts in low socioeconomic status communities do own reading resources of several and varied kinds and genres. Such variety of materials possesses the power to call adolescents` attention; therefore, teachers can use the resources present in houses to encourage their students to find their own interests in reading. Parents as well can implicitly foster leisure reading practices throughout the role modeling of reading practices of any kind; children whose parents read are more likely to increase their curiosity and engage in reading events. Still, the quality of the materials existent at home needs to be revised in extensive research studies.

Bearing in mind the concept of L2 reading under a two-component model (L1 reading skills and L2 language proficiency), researching and understanding L1 reading abilities arise as a the basic tool in order to gain knowledge on phenomena connected to reading in L2. Besides, departing from the conception of reading skills as mental abilities that work universally across languages, research on L1 reading provides meaningful knowledge to establish practical suggestions to enhance the interdependent developmental process of reading in two given languages. Based on these assertions, L2 teachers must foster not only reading activities in the target language, but in the native language as well.

Under the precept regarding the transferability of reading abilities across languages, the L1 reading abilities stand out to be essential in order to build effective processes of L2 reading development. Within rich language learning scenarios that offer motivation and proper L2 written text exposure, the L1 literacy abilities possessed by the students boost the development of L2 reading proficiency. Cross-curricular approaches among English as a foreign language and content subjects should be taken into account in order to widen the options in which reading abilities can be transferred and enhanced through practice.

The effectiveness of the transferability of L1 reading abilities and the level of such skills still needs to be placed and deeply understood in further research events as it is out of the specific scope of the present study.

6. Limitations of the Study

Gaining understanding on the fact that there are several approaches within qualitative research does not appropriately align with time constrains and requires a highly advanced level of academic language proficiency. More specifically, the understanding and further adoption of an appropriate type of qualitative method turns out to be difficult without accurate guidance. Bearing in mind the most appropriate sort of research, the execution of the case study research and the implementation of core concepts such as interpretation and in-depth description require experience and devoted time to be well conducted.

The qualitative research literature which takes into account low socioeconomic status communities´ reading practices is barely existent; therefore, an appropriate discussion with previously stated theory was hard to be conducted. The study may have included an instructional design that could have closely matched a purpose in reading in L2; however, an exploratory approach was adopted in order to fulfill the knowledge gap in relation to understanding the characteristics of adolescents´ L1 reading practices in low status communities. This literature can potentially support and trigger future research in L2 reading practices.

One of the foundations of the qualitative approach relates to the necessity to engage in a process of field work. This method requires full access to the potential events that have to do with the essential concept of the study: reading practices. When entering our focal sixth graders´ group, the natural context is somehow disturbed and the events do not occur as spontaneously as expected. In addition to the affectation of the natural context, it is important to report that the process of data collection was intermittent as participants usually were in extracurricular activities or class activities that did not relate to the purpose of this study.

7. Conclusions

The present study was designed to explore two major aspects that remained barely explored within the contemporary field of Literacy in Colombian middle-school public education: the characteristics of home and school reading practices and the perceptions towards reading that low-socioeconomic-status adolescents have constructed during their experiences as readers.

The present study confirms previous findings and contributes additional support that confirms the generalized existence of a deep scarce of adolescents` autonomy to engage in any type of reading. In spite of the availability of reading resources of varied kinds, the adolescents' willingness to read is frequently negatively influenced by the academic demand that is usually linked to reading activities. Another aspect that turned out to be decidedly relevant is the lack of effective reading role models in low socioeconomic households. The data suggests that parents or other close relatives do not frequently engage in reading events which derives in a reproduction of such habits by adolescents. This knowledge suggests several courses of action for the enhancement of reading in home contexts. The implementation of programs that provide information on the importance of reading to children in early ages must be taken into account. Besides, parents need to avoid a systematic reproduction of the mandatory model; instead, at home parents should foster the enjoyment towards reading through engaging in reading events that serve as reading role models. Teachers are suggested to visualize the home context as a potential place for the students´ engagement in reading practices as the household context in low socioeconomic status communities does own a collection of reading resources that might potentially match the interests of the students.

Still, mandatory reading events do play an important role in the current academic lives of sixth graders. Several reading activities are demanded and they are usually followed by a comprehension or summarizing assignment. The language arts teacher seeks to build an effective development of reading skills through the inclusion of a three-component model which includes: Comprehension skills, motivation, and linguistic structuralism.

Regarding sixth graders´ perceptions towards reading, the diversity of individual experiences as readers has served to create different concepts on what a good reader is. As a starting point, data suggests that some adolescents conceive reading under the concept of oral fluency. In other words, some students perceive good readers as the ones who are able to read out loud, with the proper pauses, intonation and pace. The second group evidences a marked preference to assert that good readers are people who comprehend texts. Finally, the language arts teacher conceives effective reading as a process in where several aspects take part. For this participant, the comprehension of texts, the ability to read texts out loud, and the enjoyment of the reading events are core elements within the action of reading.

This study has also found that the adolescents` concept of reading is inevitably linked to the academic field. Data shows that some strategies to foster motivation to read such as free reading sessions and free chosen books are being implemented in the target context. In spite of the inclusion of such strategies, the efforts have not been effective changing adolescents' perspective of reading as an academic activity to reading as a leisure activity. Therefore, definite necessities to strengthen the strategies by which students are expected to enhance their motivation to read. The inclusion of reading activities of texts that involves a diversity of contemporary topics without being followed by a certain kind of assignment is highly recommended.

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- Appendix A

Consent Letter

Pereira, Marzo de 2012

Estimado padre de familia:

Soy Jefferson Alexander Sánchez Montero, docente de la Institución ********************. Me permito a través de la presente solicitar su autorización para que su hijo: ******************** sea incluido en un estudio de lectura que junto a mis compañeros Pedro Alejandro Agudelo y Cristian Mauricio Osorio estamos realizando como requisito para optar al grado de Licenciado en Lengua Inglesa en la Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira.

Si autoriza la participación de su hijo en este proyecto, los investigadores o asistentes de investigación citaremos a los estudiantes en una ocasión con el fin de realizar una o dos entrevistas, en las que preguntaremos acerca de sus hábitos de lectura y sus memorias como lector. Estas sesiones serán grabadas con una grabadora digital con el fin de poderlas analizar detenidamente.

Su autorización y la participación de su hijo en este proyecto son completamente voluntarias. Igualmente, es realmente importante informarle que la participación en este proyecto no afectará de ninguna manera las notas de su hijo en las materias. La información que recojamos la utilizaremos exclusivamente con fines académicos (e.g., presentaciones, publicación de artículos, ejemplos para clases). Cuando reportemos los hallazgos de la investigación, utilizaremos seudónimos para proteger la identidad de su hijo en el estudio. No autorizar tu participación en el estudio no traerá ninguna consecuencia para su hijo.

En el espacio indicado al final, por favor indica si autoriza o no la participación de su hijo en este estudio. Si tiene alguna duda o necesita mayor información no dude en contactarme al número *********** o en las horas que tengo destinadas para la atención de padres de familia las cuales usted ya conoce. Recomiendo leer esta carta en compañía de su hijo con el fin de confirmar la disposición de su hijo para participar del proyecto.

De antemano agradezco la atención prestada a la presente.

Atentamente,

Jefferson Alexander Sánchez Montero
Docente del área de Inglés Institución Educativa ************************

_____Doy mi autorización para participar en el estudio de lectura.

Nombre: _____   Firma: _____
Teléfono de contacto: _____

_____No doy mi autorización para participar en el estudio de lectura.

- Appendix B

Observation format

OBSERVATION FORMAT

OBSERVATION

#

Date: _____

Time: _____

Observer: _____

In-advance information (if existent):

Reading materials:

Reading related events and participants` attitudes

Appendix C

Students´ Interview format

STUDENTS´ INTERVIEW FORMAT

Participant's pseudonym: **Time:**

Questions:

1- A usted le gusta leer?

2- Por qué?

3- Qué tipo de textos lee? información adicional: cuentos, informativos, científicos, etc.

4- Por lo general donde lee?

5- Para usted qué es leer, qué es ser un buen lector?

6- Cree usted que es importante saber leer?

7- Cuando lee por qué lo hace?

8- En su casa hay alguno de estos objetos: Periódicos, revistas, libros, u otros materiales de lectura?

9- Quién los utiliza? Con que frecuencia?

10- Alguno de esos objetos ha despertado su interés?

11- Cuando usted tiene que hacer alguna tarea en la que tenga que leer ¿alguna persona de su casa le ayuda?

12- Qué tipo de actividades de lectura realizan en clases? Información adicional: Lectura libre, lectura en voz alta, etc.

13- Después de leer en clase generalmente qué hacen o qué los pone a hacer la profesora?

14- En qué materia realizan mas actividades de lectura?

15- Alguna de estas palabras el suena conocida: Verbos, artículos, adjetivos, adverbios? Por qué le suena conocida?

16- Cada cuanto va a la biblioteca? Qué tipo de actividades realizan en la biblioteca?

Appendix D

Language Arts teacher´s interview

TEACHER´S INTERVIEW FORMAT

Time:

Questions:

1- ¿Cuál es su principal objetivo en términos de competencias que sus estudiantes deben desarrollar?

2- Cuéntenos un poco de cómo desarrolla sus clases. ¿Qué tipo de actividades realiza?

¿Cuál es el rol de sus estudiantes en esas actividades?

3- ¿Cuál considera usted que es el grado de motivación de sus estudiantes en clase?

4- ¿Realiza usted actividades utilizando herramientas como computadores u otras herramientas tecnológicas?

5- ¿Ha podido percibir algún tipo de acompañamiento de parte de los padres en cuanto al trabajo en casa de sus estudiantes?

6- ¿Cuál considera usted que es el nivel de los estudiantes de sexto grado en cuanto a sus habilidades de lectura?

7- ¿Cuál es su definición de buen lector?

8- ¿Cree usted que el nivel socioeconómico de los estudiantes de esta institución tiene alguna influencia en los procesos de aprendizaje de sus estudiantes?

9- ¿Fomenta usted prácticas autónomas de lectura? ¿De qué forma?
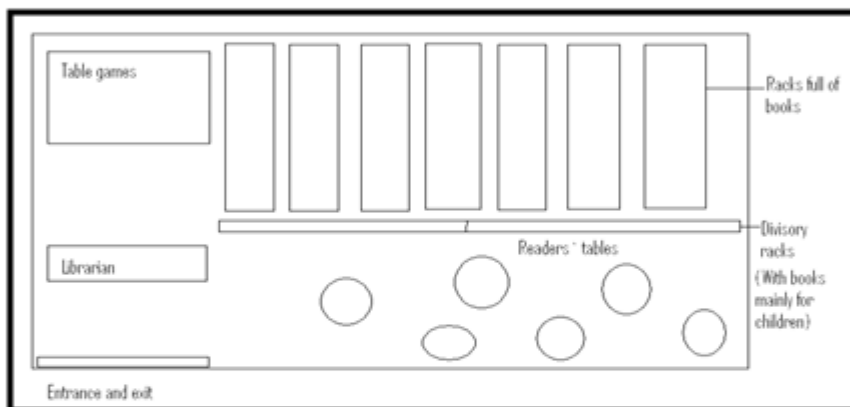
Appendix E

Sample of Field notes

Field notes

Time and date: Thursday. August the 11th 2011.

9:45 (Break time for students)

Place: Library

Sketch

A short talk with the librarian let us know that the school has a library with 7 racks that contain approximately 150 books each. Most books have been donated from other institutions, or provided from the local government. The genres are varied and go from, children´s books, to scientific, chemistry books. There are also newspapers, posters and other reading materials. There are also a large number of chess kits and sheets to draw or color in. They are highly required by students, more than books. Some 11th graders enter in groups and ask for books of physics, they seem to be doing homework. Younger students (10- 13) seem to prefer chess. Several couples of these students are playing. The library is open for all students during the break that lasts 30 minutes. A lot of noise comes from the music classroom that is under the library...