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MASTER IN

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

FOR SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

## **Improving the Reading Comprehension of Low Proficiency Students**

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

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### **Abstract**

This report describes the effects of pre reading strategies on a group of eleventh graders (low proficiency students) at Jose de San Martin School in Tabio Cundinamarca Colombia. This research aimed at improving students' reading comprehension of English texts having in mind self-directed learning principles. It was conducted taking into account students' needs, interests and English level. Five pre-reading strategies were implemented: brainstorming, visual aids, pre-questioning, pre-teaching vocabulary and K-L-W throughout twelve classes, each 55 minutes long. A reading comprehension test was administered at the beginning and at the end of the research and students' results were compared. Data was gathered through students' logs, teacher's observation schemas and a focus group interview. The qualitative and quantitative analysis shows that, students improved their reading comprehension ability; they enjoyed doing the activities and started a process of self-direction.

*Key words: pre-reading strategies, low-proficiency students, self-directed learning.*



### Resumen

Este reporte describe los efectos que tienen la aplicación de algunas estrategias de pre lectura en un grupo de estudiantes de grado 11 (estudiantes de bajo nivel de competencia) del colegio José de San Martín de Tabio Cundinamarca Colombia. El objetivo del proyecto es mejorar la comprensión de lectura de los estudiantes considerando los principios de auto aprendizaje. Se realizó teniendo en cuenta las necesidades, gustos, intereses y nivel de los estudiantes. Se implementaron cinco estrategias de pre lectura: lluvia de ideas, ayudas visuales, interrogatorio anterior, enseñanza de vocabulario previo y K-L-W en doce intervenciones. Se aplicó un test al inicio y al final del estudio y se compararon sus resultados. Los datos para el estudio fueron recopilados usando los siguientes instrumentos: diario estudiantil, un formato de registro de observaciones del docente y una entrevista a un grupo focal. Al final del estudio se pudo observar mejora en la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes, como disfrutaron de las actividades y como empezaron un proceso de auto dirección.

*Palabras clave: Estrategias de pre lectura, estudiantes bajo nivel de competencia aprendizaje auto dirigido.*



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### Introduction

Teachers can identify different problems their students have when looking closely at their teaching practices as well as their students' learning process. They need to know what happens in the classrooms, what learners are thinking, why learners are reacting in the ways they are, what aspects of the classroom should have more attention. Therefore if teachers do not truly understand classroom situations first, their decisions of implementing new approaches are likely to be based on personal fancy and whimsy rather than on what is most likely to be beneficial to the students and learning environment. (Todd, 1999). Research in classrooms is needed to accomplish all of the above.

Students, at the Jose de San Martin school, where this research was carried out, need to improve many aspects of their academic performance but there is one that has paramount importance because it is the base of many tasks, reading. As Anderson says reading, perhaps more than any other language skill, provides the foundation for success in language learning and academic learning and research findings in applied linguistics show that there is a strong correlation between reading proficiency and academic success in all education levels because learners who understand what they read usually obtain good grades. (Pretorius, 2001)

Therefore, it was necessary to plan a project that would inform teachers about the effects certain strategies can have on a group of students and show possible ways to improve students' reading comprehension based on their characteristics, needs and context. As a result this research project was designed in order to find out the effects of some pre-reading strategies on a group of 11<sup>th</sup> graders studying at Jose de San Martin School within the framework of self-directed learning.

This report describes the planning, implementation, data collection, data analysis and results of the research that was carried out. This document is divided into six chapters; the first one explains the statement of the problem, the research question, the objectives and

rationale. The second one consists of the literature review and the definitions of the constructs; then, the third chapter includes the research design. The fourth chapter contains the pedagogical intervention and implementation; the fifth chapter covers data analysis, findings, and finally chapter six presents conclusions and pedagogical implications. At the end of the report there are some appendixes that support the ideas developed in this research report.

## Chapter 1

### Statement of the problem

Public-school teachers have been interested in improving students' reading comprehension, mainly because of some problems students face when they are evaluated in English or when they have to use it at the University. As in other public schools described in some research studies (Clavijo,2011;Herrera,2010; Mahecha,2011;Quiroga, 2010,) at Jose de San Martin School , English has had one of the lowest scores in Prueba Saber 11°. For instance Herrera (2010) explains that a quarter of the tested student population can only read superficially, without applying strategies to make sense of the test. This author also highlights some problems our students have regarding reading comprehension:

**Table1**

### Reading Comprehension Competence Percentage

Percentage of Students	Competence	Comments
• 26,49%	They get just explicit information given by the text	These reading scores indicate that most high school students can make connections and inferences when they read, but that a very small minority is able to raise questions and
• 68,84%	They read texts inferentially	
• 3,62%	They can evaluate the text critically.	



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		approach the text critically.
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He also states that one fact supporting low reading skills among students at school could be derived from “sociocultural practices of literacy in the country. Colombians may lack reading habits because reading does not seem to be a common feature in the lifestyle of Colombian people” (Herrera, 2010, p.2).

**Table 2**

**Colombian Reading Habits Statistics based on National administrative department of statistics (*DANE, in Spanish*)**

•	only 17,58%	People who live in the larger cities read every day
•	Just 8,18%	Colombian population read one book in a year
•	59,18%	Colombian people have no interest in reading books
•	29,99%).	Colombian people do not read because of lack of time
•	6,62%	Colombian people prefer to read newspapers, magazines, or comics instead of books.

As a consequence reading needs to have a more significant presence in learners’ lives (Herrera, 2010) At the Jose de San Martin School, students are reluctant to read because it is not interesting for them when they do not participate in choosing the reading topics, and they are not involved in their learning process. That is why self-directed learning (SDL) may help learners change their attitudes, by raising students’ motivation and awareness of their learning process based on students’ specific characteristics, likes, needs and context.

In addition, students at the Jose de San Martin School do not have enough vocabulary to understand texts, they achieve understanding at a literal level, and they do not try to infer or go beyond the text, therefore they are not able to connect previous knowledge with a new topic.



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On the other hand, not only learners from schools have reading comprehension problems but also University students do as well (Herrera, 2010; Kalmanovitz, 1989 cited in Rincon, 2000). At Jose de San Martin School, it is evident that when seniors take a University entrance exam, their scores are low or when they take English as a subject at the University level, it is too demanding to read the required texts for their career. (Gordillo, 2009).

Furthermore, as in other schools (Clavijo, 2011; Herrera, 2010; Mahecha, 2011; Quiroga, 2010) at Jose de San Martin School, there is a project designed to improve reading comprehension. This project called LEA contains the theoretical background on the importance of reading, the methodology for classes, activities for each academic term and some evaluation guidelines designed for the Spanish reading comprehension classes. Even though teachers always plan what to do at the beginning of each year, they do not monitor, collect data, reflect, evaluate and analyze results that informed decisions for the next year. Moreover, there are no plausible evidences of the effects this project has had on students' performance.

Thus, it was necessary to conduct a research project that follows action research principles; the teacher researcher follows a plan, reflects, collects data, analyzes results, and shares findings. In addition, students are involved in their learning process, and the research emerges from the students' needs not the teachers'.

Moreover, this research focus on the implementation of pre-reading strategies that may affect how readers understand what they read ,help readers increase their vocabulary in a meaningful, relevant way, and focus their attention as they read ( Seneca, 2011).

### **Research Question**

Hence, I decided to start a research project to help students overcome their reading comprehension problems. Pre reading strategies were chosen as these strategies involve students in the themes, concepts, and vocabulary of the text before they even pick up the article, textbook passage, or piece of literature. Effective pre-reading strategies also stimulate students' prior knowledge about a topic; it is easier to make connections between new and



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known information, make predictions about what will happen next, and organize what is read into the mental file folders that already exist in the brain (Abraham, 2002; Nunan, 1999; Ringler & Weber, 1984). Therefore in this perspective the research question was:

- What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the framework of Self-Directed Learning on the reading comprehension of low-proficiency public school students?

### Research objectives

- To improve low-proficiency students' reading comprehension by using some pre- reading strategies.
- To motivate and train students in the use of these strategies so that they become more skillful and confident when reading a text.
- To promote self-directed learning as a tool for personal and continuous improvement.

### Rationale

The idea of using pre-reading strategies comes from the desire to find a useful way - to address different problems and needs of the group of students participating in this project. Different authors such as Parviz (2006), Seneca (2011), Varaprasad, (1997) cited in Saricoban,(2002) and Weber (1984), maintain that the use of pre-reading strategies really help students overcome problems such as lack of vocabulary, motivation, reluctance to read and low understanding of texts.

Taking into account that at the Jose de San Martin School there were no records of doing any research, this study represents an innovation for the school and a good opportunity to motivate other teachers to try action research in their classrooms. Besides, the results of this research may enlighten the LEA project leaders as they may see benefits of addressing students' needs, likes and context rather than strictly following theory and activities given by books. On the other hand, this research project will introduce teachers and students of this school to self-directed learning which according to Knowles (1975) is:



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“a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.” (p. 18)

Furthermore, a large group students as the one chosen for this research ( 39 eleventh grade students) needs to be really involved in their learning process in order to build strong competences for the 21<sup>st</sup> century world (Gillam,2012) and reach high education standards. Self-directed learning is a way of achieving this, as students actively engages in their learning processes acquiring higher order thinking skills, reasoning in new different ways, solving problems, and thinking critically about the content of the course or a specific activity or task (Hiemstra, 1994).

This research project will benefit students as they start a self-directed process guided by the teacher researcher who will raise students’ awareness towards learning, give explicit information about how to use different strategies; and encourage learners to become actively involved in the subject by asking their opinions, feelings, problems, ideas and suggestions for the activities and lessons .For instance, the reading topics were chosen based on the needs analysis of the group and on students’ ideas about what to read.

Moreover, pre reading strategies should encourage learners to use their background knowledge on the topic (Eskey, 1997; cited in Van Duzer, 1999), draw on appropriate schematic knowledge to reach a satisfactory interpretation of the text (Wallace, 1992) and provide readers with the necessary back-ground to relate new information with their existing knowledge (Ausubel 1959;Weber, 1984). On the other hand, for those students who lack adequate vocabulary, the teacher may introduce key words using a pre reading activity to “focus on language awareness, such as finding synonyms, antonyms, derivate, or associated words” (Hood et al., 1996; cited in Van Duzer, 1999).



## Chapter 2

### Literature review

This chapter covers an explanation of the constructs and summarizes some relevant studies carried out in the field of reading comprehension. Constructs in the research question “what are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the framework of Self-Directed Learning on the reading comprehension of low-proficiency public school students?” are as follows: firstly, reading comprehension; secondly, pre reading strategies; thirdly low-proficiency students and finally self-directed Learning- SDL.

#### *Reading Comprehension*

Nunan, 1999 defines reading as an interactive process that involves both linguistic (bottom-up) and background (top-down) knowledge. Likewise, Grellet (1999) asserts that understanding a written text means extracting the required information from it as efficiently as possible. In the same way, different studies point out that a skillful reader uses different strategies according to the reading purpose; sometimes the reader will ignore irrelevant information, others the reader will carefully read each line to infer meaning and understand the author’s intention. Similarly, Duffy (1993) as cited by NIH (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development) (2000) asserts that “the best way to pursue meaning is through conscious, controlled use of strategies” (p.268).

As can be seen, strategies play a key role in the students’ reading process. Nunan (1999) affirms that "strategies are those mental processes and operations used by learners to learn and then communicate" (p.264). In addition the NIH stresses that “comprehension strategies are specific procedures that guide students to become aware of how well they comprehend as they attempt to read and write” (p.232). Therefore, teachers need to carefully select those specific procedures that will help students construct meaning.

Revising the literature, there are 21 different pre reading strategies : having a purpose, previewing, skimming, scanning, clustering (reading clusters of words as a unit), avoiding bad habits, predicting, reading actively (asking questions), inferring (ideas not explicitly stated),



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identifying paragraph structure, identifying sentence structure, noticing cohesive devices, inferring unknown vocabulary, identifying figurative language, using background knowledge, identifying style and its purpose, evaluating (critically), integrating information, reviewing, reading to present.

A sufficient amount of research in the field of EFL deals with reading. Since the late 60's a number of theorists (Goodman, 1970; Smith, 1978) have developed interactive theories of reading which give huge importance to the knowledge the reader brings to the text. This interactive process on one hand attracts special attention from researchers in the reading field, and on the other hand influences teaching practice. (Minoos, 2010)

There are also some recent research studies about reading comprehension in high schools and universities. In Saudi Arabia, Hesham Suleiman carried out a research study "Teaching Reading Comprehension to ESL/EFL Learners" at Alyousef Albaya Intermediate School in 2006 in which he briefly discusses the tenets of reading comprehension, the cognitive tasks involved in reading as well as the various activities teachers use in teaching reading comprehension. This study supports my ideas about the need to teach ESL learners reading and the role pre-reading strategies play in the reading process as an important tool.

Adriana Gordillo Alfonso and María del Pilar Flórez in the study "Reading Comprehension Levels: Towards an Investigative and Reflective Statement to Improve University Students' Reading Comprehension" in 2009, address the reading comprehension level of some students entering the first semester of the degree Native Language, English and French at La Salle University; the research used the cognitive linguistic perspective. This study analyzed three levels of reading comprehension (literal, inferential and critical) the results show that most of the students comprehend at the literal level and therefore are called as reading apprentices. Finally, the researchers explained a pedagogical proposal in order to improve students' reading comprehension. This study provides evidence of a problem that seniors at the Jose de San Martin School have, low reading comprehension; this fact confirms the importance of my research in helping students to improve their reading comprehension so that they can be more proficient at the university level.



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Florencia Montes, María Patricia Botero and Tracy Pechthalt, carried out an action research study “Reading Comprehension from a First to a Second Language” at a private school in Bogotá Colombia, in 2009. They did a two month study that focuses on how a student’s first language (L1) reading comprehension skills affect the same skills in their second language (L2). The subjects of the study were sixth-grade girls, ages ranging from 11 to 13 years old. The researchers conclude that there are some common stages and characteristics in the process of reading comprehension in L1 and L2. Therefore, if there are similar stages in L1 and L2 my study may provide important information about students’ reading comprehension that could be applied in both English and Spanish classes.

Jairo Clavijo and Ana Teresa Maldonado Carrillo carried out a research study “Enhancing the reader’s comprehension by means of ICTs” in Barranquilla, Colombia in 2011. They used the information and communications technology (ICTs) to support the development of fifth graders’ reading comprehension. This study holds common features with my research project. For instance, this research addresses the pre- reading stage as an important part of the reading process; besides as in my research project, the researchers wanted to know the learners’ reading comprehension level before and after the intervention so they applied a pre-test and post-test and used descriptive statistics to analyze them. This study has evidence of SDL; researchers conclude that the students’ performance in the classroom generated collaborative work and students’ strengths self-recognition.

Finally, Marlén Rátiva Velandia, Andrés Leonardo Pedreros Torres and Mónica Núñez Alí in their study “Using Web-Based Activities to Promote Reading: An Exploratory Study with Teenagers” at El Libertador School, Colombia in 2012 analyzed the impact of web-based activities on tenth grade students’ reading comprehension. Data was gathered by means of questionnaires, surveys and web based activities and the results showed that students work with enthusiasm, when they read information concerning topics from different subjects, accessing knowledge in a different way and improving their reading comprehension. This study supports that it is possible to insert new tools in class; the



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researchers used web- based activities as an innovation and I framed the research within self-directed learning which is an innovation as well.

### *Pre-reading strategies*

Pre-reading strategies can be defined as those goal-oriented activities used with students prior to the actual reading of the material. These activities provide learners with the required background knowledge to maximize comprehension when interacting with a passage (Ringler & Weber, 1984). In addition, Nunan (1999) and Abraham (2002) state and emphasize that pre-reading and schema-building tasks should be used with low proficiency students to activate their previous knowledge. A schema refers to a hypothetical mental structure for representing generic concepts stored in memory, which helps learners to recognize the knowledge they already have about a given topic.

Some pre-reading activities simply consist of questions to which the reader is required to find answers based on the text. Other pre-reading tasks have tended to focus exclusively on preparing the reader for likely linguistic difficulties in a text.

Research related to pre-reading strategies has been developed in Colombia and all over the world. Endo,(2005).in the framework of his study “Curriculum: Effects of Pre reading Activities: A Way to Change Student Reading Style” mentioned some authors points of view (Aline,1992; Aebersold & Field, 1997; Barnett, 1989; Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992, Pate, 1995) in relation to the importance and usefulness of pre reading strategies in the reading process. Endo also cites Fukuo (1990) and Andrade (1997) to address the benefits pre-reading strategies have:

“(1) To provide students with a particular purpose for reading; (2) To help them predict the content of the text; (3) To facilitate comprehension; (4) To motivate students to read. Then in the reading context, if the activities cover three aspects: presentation of vocabulary, preliminary questions and information relevant to texts, how student reading strategy could be changed and rectified. (p. 1169)”



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This study was carried out by Endo (2005) at College of Columbia University with a group of 33 learners at a public co-educational high school in the eastern part of the Shizuoka Prefecture from September 2001 throughout January 2002. . As in my study this one wanted to see the effects of pre-reading strategies on students' reading comprehension. He observed how students' way of reading changed, eventually moving away from the yakudoku style<sup>1</sup> and how the pre reading activities seemed to foster students' interaction with the text

Parviz Ajideh' study "Schema-theory Based Considerations on Pre-reading Activities in ESP Textbooks" was carried out at Tabriz University, in Iran 2006. He looked at some pre-reading activities ESP text books have and analyzed them based on schema theory principles. He found these activities interactive because students are active participants and they work with each other before they target the text. The activities also have a predictive nature because in the pre-reading phase, the students' discussion basically anticipates what will appear in the reading material. Besides, they are student centered because they make use of the students' prior knowledge and the students have control over the learning process. Finally the activities create a fresh atmosphere in ESL class and motivate the students to read and learn. This study is very important as it highlights key aspects to take into account when designing the lessons.

Palita Thongyon and Thanyapa Chiramanee carried out a study "The Effects of Pre-reading Activities on Reading Comprehension Ability" with a group of 60 ninth grade students studying at Muslim Witaya Phuket.in Thailand 2011. The researchers compared the learners' comprehension ability before and after the implementation of two types of pre reading activities: guessing reading content from pictures and asking pre-reading questions. Thongyon and Chiramanee also investigated the learners' attitudes towards the implementation of the two pre reading activities. Students took a test whose scores were used to assign participants into two groups according to their languages abilities .Each group was given a different pre-reading activity out of the two mentioned above. Afterwards, 22 lesson plans were implemented and data was gathered through: a pre and post-reading comprehension test and a questionnaire asking about the subjects' attitudes towards the two pre-reading activities,

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<sup>1</sup> Typical English study in Japan



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as I did in my research project using the students' logs. Researchers statistically analyzed the data to identify means, standard deviation and the t-value; they found that "after implementation of the 2 pre-reading activities the subjects performed better in the post-test, at significant level of .01. When they compared the results of the 2 pre-reading activities, it was found that the group receiving guessing meaning from pictures performed better than their counterpart who experience pre-reading questions, at .05. It was also found that both groups were highly satisfied with the activity they experienced." (Thongyon & Chiramanee, , 2011; p1). This study has similar characteristics to my study because I compared reading comprehension ability before and after the implementation using descriptive statistics and gathered students' reflections in relation to the effect of pre reading strategies.

Kei Mihara did a research study "Effects of Pre-Reading Strategies on EFL/ESL Reading Comprehension" in Canada 2011 to examine the effects of two pre-reading strategies (vocabulary pre-teaching and pre-questioning) and discussed the relationships between students' English proficiency and their reading comprehension. The participants performed a pre reading strategy, read a passage (four in total), and then answered some comprehension questions. Three weeks after they read the fourth text, participants answered a questionnaire. The study points out that pre- teaching vocabulary is less effective for Japanese students. Therefore my study observed the effects four pre-reading strategies had on students' reading comprehension.

Jorge Armando Herrera Correa and Andres Mauricio Espinosa developed a research study "The Instruction of Reading Comprehension Strategies to a Group of Sixth-grade English-as-a-foreign Language Learners in a public school context" in Pereira, 2010. They explored the effects of applying six pre and while reading strategies i.e .skimming, scanning reading titles for predictions, taking notes, underlining unknown words, underlining important information and using images on sixth grade students' English comprehension skills. Data was collected through questionnaires, interviews, and video recordings. Researchers found that when a teacher impart reading instruction, it is necessary to know in advance how to identify and apply the given reading strategy in order to communicate that cognitive knowledge to the students, besides teachers have to model activities to students so that they

can understand the way to use the strategy. Therefore in my study I used Spanish to explain the pre-reading strategy and modeled it to my students.

According to the studies described above, the use of reading strategies helps students' performance in many ways on one hand by activating background knowledge, reinforcing vocabulary, and focusing students' attention on a particular topic and on the other, by raising students' awareness of their learning process.

Below, there is the definition of the pre reading strategies used in this research project: brainstorming, pre- questioning, visual aids, KWL and pre teaching vocabulary.

### ***Brainstorming***

Teachers ask students to examine together the title of the selection they are about to read. The teacher lists on the board all the information that comes to mind as students read the title. These ideas are then used by learners to further recall using this knowledge to reframe or reorder what they know and understand of the text. Besides, within the process considerable knowledge will be activated. (Seneca, 2011)

### **Pre-questioning**

It consists of a set of written questions that help students focus their attention on the reading as well as connect their prior knowledge to the text content. The purpose is not to test but make students aware of the topic, ideas, structure or format of the text (Alemi & Ebadi, n.d.)

### **Visual Aids**

Pictures and other visual material can activate a students' prior knowledge. If a student has some schema for fossils, a simple picture may serve to retrieve appropriate knowledge. Thus a teacher may share a fossil photograph before students read a science textbook chapter on fossils. The picture serves to activate the students' schemata on fossils. Therefore visual aids help students to find relevant connections in the knowledge they have in their minds (Karla Porter, M.Ed.)



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### **KWL**

This strategy consists of three steps students should follow when working mainly, with expository texts: KWL is intended to be an exercise for a study group or class which foster students' understanding of a text (Bos, & Vaughn.2002). Students complete the following table according to the reading stage they are in:

K	W	L
What we Know	What we Want to know	What we Learned

### **Pre- Teaching Vocabulary**

The teacher explains all the words in a text that students are unlikely to know; although they have to be key words that cannot be guessed from context and students actually need and even use productively; vocabulary directly linked to the topic of the text can be used to activate students' schemata (Roberts, 2012).

After defining the pre reading strategies used in this research study, there are two more constructs to talk about: low proficiency students and self-directed learning.

### ***Low Proficiency Students***

Low proficiency students are seen as unsuccessful learners. Some authors have found certain common characteristics related to lacking positive learning attitudes, motivation, or persistence. In class, they need more personal attention, take longer to finish a learning task, often skip class or attend class late, and often delay or do not submit homework assignments (Hsu & Sheu, 2008). In addition, Roberts (2007) mentions that these students may have low self-esteem because of their inability to learn as efficiently as everyone else in class. She also points out that these students have difficulties when using English learning strategies.



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Some of the studies described above worked with low proficiency participants (Mahecha, 2011; Quiroga, 2010) and they recommend that the teacher build a motivational environment in which students can identify their strengths.

### *Self-directed Learning*

Knowles (1975) affirms that as people grow their capacity to learn increases as well as their need to be self-directed (self-concept). In addition, people need to use their experiences and knowledge to solve problems (orientation to learning) in evolving life tasks (readiness to learn). Hence, self-directed learning (SDL) is defined as the process learners go through as they diagnose their learning needs, set goals, seek useful resources, choose and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes.

This concept entails two dimensions that refer to the internal or external characteristics of the learning process. The former, called self-management by Garrison (1997), corresponds to planning, implementing, and evaluating this process. Regarding this, Knowles (1975) emphasizes that the internal motivation makes learners feel curious, enthusiastic towards learning and eager to feel recognized for accomplishing the learning goals. In addition Garrison (1997) talks about two internal characteristics: self-monitoring (an internal cognitive responsibility), and motivation to develop a task. The external dimension refers to the responsibility learners assume with their learning process (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991).

In order to teach students to be self-directed, Grow (1991) proposes determining their SD stage so that teachers can help them to move up to the next stage. He identifies four SD stages: low self-direction or dependent learners, moderate self-direction or interested learners, intermediate self-direction or involved learners, and high self-direction or SD learners.

The teacher's role change at each stage. In stage one, teachers should be the authority because dependent learners need coaching with immediate feedback, drill and insight; in stage two, teachers should be motivators and guides because interested learners need inspiring lecture plus guided discussion, goal-setting and learning strategies; in stage three, teachers



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should be facilitators because involved learners need discussions facilitated by teachers who participate as equals, seminar and group projects; and in stage four, teachers should be consultants and delegators because self-directed learners need internship, dissertation, individual work or self-directed study-group (Grow, 1991).

Some useful SDL activities and resources are scientific inquiry, learning contracts, self-discovery process (Knowles, 1975), self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, portfolios, and reflective writing activities (Hiemstra, 1994). Malcolm and Rindfleisch (2003) give some examples of SDL projects, such as: reading/vocabulary, journal writing, on-line newsletters, speaking contest, debate club, audiocassette journal, play reading, lexical sets, collocation notebook, listening/dictation, research survey, and students/teachers' roles.

Héctor Fabio Vásquez Cardona and Andrés Felipe Suárez Maya did a research project (Reading is Thinking: Improving Reading Comprehension Using the think-aloud Method) in 2011 at Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. In this study the researchers saw the impact generated by the think-aloud method on the English reading comprehension of five pre-intermediate students from a public and urban university. Journals, observations and interviews were used to collect data. Their results were positive: four students reached a better comprehension of texts and all of the students achieved positive changes in relation to vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and writing.

In China, Fenfang Li carried out a study on English Reading Strategies Used by Senior Middle School Students at the School of Foreign Languages, Chongqing Yangtze Normal University Chongqing in 2010. She states that for the past several decades many researchers have been interested in reading strategies but they have forgotten the role metacognitive awareness plays in the reading process. This researcher investigated the students' awareness of reading strategies used at the senior and middle school level. The major findings were: first, there is a moderate awareness of all the strategies; second the students hold a preference for problem solving reading strategies, followed by global and support reading strategies; third, females show higher use of reading strategies than males in



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each individual category, as well as in the combined sub-categories. Also, females are more careful and considerate while the males are more adventurous and bolder. Finally, the readers' metacognitive awareness of reading strategies is closely linked to their language proficiency. Based on the findings above, several suggestions can be made to help teachers improve their teaching and help the students improve their reading efficiency.

Therefore, these studies described above support the effects SDL may generate in students' lives at the Jose de San Martin School and the importance of making students part of their learning. As all those studies, my research may also provide teachers an evident example of how a project can be framed within SDL and how it is possible to have useful changes in our public school contexts.



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### Chapter 3

#### Research Design Framework

##### Type of the study

This study corresponds to an action research study. According to- Emily Calhoun (1994); Parsons and Brown (2002); Miller (2007), and Nunan (1990) action research is a form of investigation designed for teachers to solve problems and improve professional practices in their own classrooms. It involves systematic observations and data collection, which can be then used by the practitioner-researcher to reflect, make decisions and develop more effective classroom strategies.

Thus, within this study the problem came from the classroom and the teacher-researcher wanted to find possible ways to solve it as well as new teaching practices related to the students' reading comprehension difficulties. Action research is an iterative, cyclical process; in which first the teacher-researcher identifies the problem and gather "base line data", then he plans the intervention ,applies some actions , observes the outcomes ,reflects on the data and identifies the " follow up issue" to start the cycle again. (Nunan and Bailey, 2009, p. 229)

This study was planned, supported and assessed by a research circle<sup>2</sup> in which the cycle process of action research was followed. After identifying the problem, some data were gathered. Then-co researchers, with the tutor's support planned the interventions applied them and observed. During each research circle meeting (every two weeks) co-researchers and tutor reflected upon what was observed, they made decisions if necessary and continued with the research.

In order to gather the data needed to answer the research question, it was necessary to collect quantitative and qualitative data to obtain reliable and valid information. Therefore, a mixed method approach was followed. Under this framework the researcher collects,

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<sup>2</sup> Research circle integrated by four co-researchers and a tutor, from the Master's program of Universidad de La Sabana.



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analyzes, and integrates both quantitative (quan) and qualitative (qual) data. According to Creswell (2008) mixed method studies provide the opportunity to efficiently generate greater understanding of research. This author also states that this data analysis approach strongly supports the conclusions deriving from the analysis as they are found through convergence and corroboration of findings (triangulation). It adds insight and meaning that might otherwise be missed in mono-method approaches; besides, it increases generalizability of results and produces more complete knowledge to inform practice. However, it is also practically more complex, it needs intensive time and collaborative work.

### **Context**

This research project was carried out at the public school Jose de San Martin in Tabio Cundinamarca Colombia. This school has approximately 3000 students in elementary and secondary levels which are in separate places around the town. The secondary section is in the urban area of Tabio, and it holds two shifts morning and afternoon.

The school curriculum is based on the project approach with a humanistic focus within it students are expected to create and transform reality, develop critical thinking becoming autonomous and responsible, work from their own interests on planning and developing their life projects.

In terms of the English curriculum, it includes objectives, theoretical and legal basis; national standards, class methodology and evaluation criteria within the framework of project approach. It strives for the students' integral growth in communication. In elementary level, students have two hours (60m) of English class per week and in secondary level they have three hours (55 m) of English class per week.

The languages department leads a project called LEA, described above, with the purpose of improving students' reading comprehension; however it is addressed more to Spanish classes than to English.



## Participants

The group chosen for implementing the project was 11E, a group of 39 learners: 11 girls and 28 boys whose average age ranges from 16 to 18 years old. They belong to socio economic levels 1 and 2 and they have studied all their high school at the Jose de San Martin School. It seemed that most of them liked the English class and enjoyed it, although, they could not work on their own, did not understand grammar rules easily, lack vocabulary and liked to translate every single word into Spanish. Some students were good at listening because they liked listening to music in English and some others knew basic vocabulary. Besides most of students tried to speak English in class because they wanted to improve their English level.

Additionally, students from this group have some common learning styles. They are visual, kinesthetic and interpersonal because they prefer using pictures, images, spatial understanding, sound and music and their body to carry out academic activities (Vark, n.d).

According to the CEF (Common European Framework) they are in A1 and A2 levels because they can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type; they can introduce themselves and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where they live , people they know and things they have; they can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.(CEF document, 2001, p. 5).

## Researcher's role

The teacher of the group of students described above acted as teacher –researcher. According to Brown (2002), by doing this, the teacher has growth opportunities for constant improvement of practice based on observation, feedback, reflection, evaluation, and concerted effort to start again. Therefore, the teacher planned and observed the interventions, gathered, analyzed data and reflected upon the teaching and learning process.

The teacher also acted as a facilitator of learning (Gillam 2012) by engaging, leading, inspiring students to take ownership of their own learning, and encouraging them to use the given tools to improve their learning comprehension. Finally, the teacher provided



opportunities for students to learn key concepts and choose the tools they need to become lifelong learners.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This research followed some ethical considerations described by some authors, (Lynn, 2012; Polonski, 2004 ;, Tochim, 2006)

- Voluntary participation and confidentiality. All parents of those' learners involved in the research were asked for permission to allow their children to participate in the project by means of consent letters. Therefore, students and parents know all the information from this research study is confidential.
- Institutional approval, The researcher asked for the principal`s approval to carry out the research project at the Jose de San Martin School.
- Plagiarism awareness. The researcher did not copy or present any work as her own.

The results of the study are for research purposes rather than failing or passing students even though some grades were used as part of the students' assessment process.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

Taking into consideration the high standards required for action research projects, the concepts of validity, reliability and triangulation were included in the process of planning data collection instruments. Validity refers to the essential faithfulness of a piece of data, the research confirms that the data actually measure what it is supposed to measure, (Sagor, 2000) and because of this, research design and data analysis procedures are crucial. . In addition, Todd (1999) claims that in action research, "validity can be measured by the extent to which the research produces findings which are useful in developing the classroom situation". (p.24)

Reliability refers to the accuracy of the data. To enhance the reliability of the action research data, when planning data collection, it is necessary following Sagor (2000) guidelines, to ask:- Is this information an accurate representation of reality?,- Can I think of any reasons to be suspicious of its accuracy?

As a result of this, action researchers use triangulation; which involves the use of multiple independent sources of data to establish the truth and accuracy of a statement. Table 3 shows the triangulation matrix designed for this research project.

**Table 3****Triangulation Matrix**

Data Collection Instrument	Reading Comprehension Test	Students' Log	Teacher's Observation Schema	Focus Group Interview
Research Question				
What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the frame of Self-Directed Learning on low proficiency public school students' reading comprehension?	Quantitative Data	Qualitative Data	Qualitative Data	Qualitative Data

Below you can find the description of each instrument used in this study: pre and post-test, students' logs, teacher's observation schema and focus group interview.



### Pre and Post Test

Pre and Post tests are designed to evaluate students' performance before and after the intervention, it is a viable method "to assess the extent to which an educational intervention has had an impact on student" (Newton, 1999, p. 1). Besides, testing is a simple way to assess changes during the process so that, at the end it is possible to determine if students improved based on some statistical measurements. Taking this into account, a test was applied at the beginning and at the end of the research in order to analyze quantitatively the effects of using pre reading strategies in the group of participants (low proficiency students) and measure if students had improved their reading comprehension.

This test was taken from a specialized web site <http://englishforeveryone.org> (appendix 1) it was the same one both at the beginning and at the end of the intervention to guarantee the validity of the measure. According to the authors "after reading a passage, students are tested on their ability to draw inferences, understand scope and global concepts, find or recall details, and infer the meaning of useful vocabulary words" (Roberts, n.d.). Students read a relatively familiar context and then answer 10 multiple choice questions.

### Students log

Researchers in the research circle<sup>3</sup> designed this instrument to have records of students' ideas, feelings and suggestions after each intervention. These logs contained a record of the students' reflections about what they are learning and how going about learning. Bozo (2008) claims that students' logs promote students' metacognition and help teachers to know how learners are reacting to the task, material, and strategies within the lesson.

Two students' logs were considered, the first version (appendix 2) had nine items written in English and Spanish. However after analyzing the research process carried out during the first interventions; it was evident that the students were reluctant to fill in the format and that the information provided was not enough for the study. Therefore the

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<sup>3</sup> Research circle integrated by four co-researchers and a tutor, from the Master's program of Universidad de La Sabana.



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students' log was redesigned (appendix 3) fewer and more concrete items were used so that students would spend less time filling it in and more useful data for the project were collected. Students recorded their opinions regarding the pre-reading strategy they were taught. The reflection process was guided as students answered different questions that allowed them to deeply think about their reading process.

This instrument supports the self-directed framework this study follows because useful SDL characteristics are immersed in it. On one hand, students could self-monitor their performance, promoting an internal cognitive responsibility (Garrison, 1997). On the other hand, they reflected on the activities, materials and teacher's role and they suggested topics for the reading texts to be used in the next intervention. (Hiemstra, 1994)

The students' logs were analyzed qualitatively to see what effects the use of pre reading strategies had on students' motivation, self-confidence and reading comprehension. Besides, the instrument provided data to see whether students started a process of self-direction and what impact this process could have on their personal lives.

### **Teacher's Observation Schema**

The research circle members also designed this instrument (appendix 4) . It is a form with different items for the teacher-researcher to reflect upon and write down his/her observations during each intervention. The main purpose is to find out the teacher's perceptions about their own teaching practices in relation to the research question. The observation schema is useful to focus the attention on the progress of certain students' skills of particular interest for the purposes of a given research study(Maxwell, 2001)

For this research study, the following categories were chosen so that evidence of improvement in reading comprehension was gathered. 1) Context information: date, group, number of students, time, special situation; 2) description of the strategy: strategy applied and materials; and 3) description of the results: general outcomes, positive evidences and difficulties.



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### Focus Group Interview

Focus groups correspond to “a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic determined by the researcher” (Morgan, 1997 cited at Nunan and Bailey, 2009, p 314). The interview needs a moderator who creates a non-judgmental and nurturing environment that encourages different perceptions and points of view, without pressuring participants. Marksall and Sewell (2005) also point out these kind of interviews can give information on how groups of people think or feel about a particular topic, give greater insights into why certain opinions are held, help improve the planning and design of new programs, provide a means of evaluating existing programs or produce insights for developing strategies for outreach.

The research circle designed this instrument through a collaborative process (appendix 5). It consisted of four open questions that were answered by a focus group. The group consisted of six students chosen at random from three main groups: two high achievers, two average students and two low achievers; these categories were based on the student’s scores from reading comprehension tests applied up to that moment. The interview was held in Spanish using very friendly and simple language. The teacher-researcher explained students the purpose of the interview and created a safe environment for them. It took 30 minutes but just about 8 minutes were recorded because of some technological problems with the camera; so, the teacher-researcher wrote some key words on a piece of paper during the interview and afterwards she completed the ideas.

Qualitative data was gathered during the interview regarding students’ ideas, feelings and thoughts related to their difficulties when they read, the extent to which pre reading strategies helped them to improve reading, the students’ use of the logs and any personal experience or anecdote they had associated to the research project.



### **Validation process**

The validation process was supported by some theory background in relation to validity and reliability concepts. On one hand, “validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure” and on the other hand, “reliability deals with consistency of a measure” (Biddix, p.1). Each instrument was designed in order to address the research question, research objectives and constructs.

The content of each instrument was validated in the research circle. For instance, based on reliability principles the same test was given to participants before and after the intervention; two tests constructed the same way and from the same content make the instrument reliable as well as their results (Biddix, n.d. ).

The students’ log was redesigned to make it more valid and reliable because the first one did not gather real and useful data and it lacked consistency. In relation to the teacher’s observation schema, it was assessed by the research circle every time the teacher used it, in order to check if the data were reliable and useful for the research. Additionally, the researchers in the research circle assessed the interview questions.

Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative data gathered in this research project were triangulated from different sources of data (see Table1.2) strengthening the validity and reliability of research by telling a more comprehensive story of the aspect being examined (Murphy, 2011).



## Chapter 4

### Pedagogical Intervention

This research has three stages: pre, while and post. In each stage there were some objectives and actions that were planned, designed and validated in the research circle. Below there is a description of each stage, followed by timeline and the lesson plan.

#### Pre-stage

The school community, including the principal, the students and their parents, were informed about this research project. All of them signed consent letters (see appendix 6) and approved this research. In addition, the students' reading comprehension level was determined by means of a reading comprehension test (appendix 1). Finally, the first four interventions were designed as well as the data collection tools. The research circle determined to do twelve interventions - in order to implement the pre-reading strategies.

#### While-stage

After the first four lesson plans were implemented, an analysis of what had happened during the interventions was conducted, taking into account the researcher's insights and the data coming from the data collection instruments information. As a result of this analysis the students' logs were modified in order to get more precise information.

Afterwards, the next lessons were designed. The texts for these lessons were chosen according to the students' suggestions recorded in their students' logs. This pedagogical choice was made to promote a moderate self-direction stage, in which students are interested in their learning process (Grow, 1991).

After the sixth intervention, a test was applied, different from the one applied before the intervention, whose main purpose was to determine students' reading comprehension after some lessons were taught. Based on the students' results, the teacher-researcher modified the way pre reading strategies were explained and modeled; for instance she paid more attention to the resources used to present the strategy and gave meaningful short samples of how using it.



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Five pre reading strategies were taught during the intervention: brainstorming, visual aids, pre-questioning, pre-teaching vocabulary and K-W-L. Five interventions were needed to present all the strategies, then during the sixth and seventh interventions students used two strategies suggested by the teacher-researcher each time according to the given text.

From the eighth to the twelfth intervention, students chose the strategy by themselves. In order to do this, teacher-researcher designed an individual worksheet with all the strategies suggested. Before reading a text, the teacher reminded students about each pre-reading strategy and let them choose and apply the one they felt most comfortable with (See appendix 7). In this way the students were given more SDL strategies, the attention was not centered on the teacher but on the students; moving therefore from the teacher centered classroom to the student centered one in which the teacher becomes a facilitator of learning (Grow, 1991; Hiemstra, 1994; Nunan, 1999)

### **Post-stage**

At the end of the intervention the students took the same test applied at the beginning of the research and some students, chosen at random from different level groups participated in an interview.

For the qualitative data the pre and post tests were statistically compared and for the qualitative data the grounded theory approach principles were followed to carry out this analysis.

### **Research Timeline and Lesson plan samples**

Table 4 shows the timeline planned for this research. One lesson was planned for each intervention. The lesson had a motivation activity (a short rhyme or song) as warming-up activity; then the pre reading strategy was introduced. Afterwards the teacher modeled and applied the strategy and finally let the students use the strategy and read the text. At the end of the lesson, they filled in their logs and most of the times follow-up activities were carried out by students at home.

Table 4

## Intervention Timeline

Stage	Date	Objective	Data Collection Instrument
Pre-stage	May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inform students about the project</li> <li>Know students' attitudes towards reading</li> </ul>	-
	June 1st	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Get permission from parents and the principal of the school</li> </ul>	
	June 6 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find out students' reading level</li> </ul>	Pre-test
While-stage	July 10 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Start using brainstorming as a pre reading strategy before reading a text</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	July 16 <sup>th</sup> and 17 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use visual aids as a pre reading strategy when reading a text</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	July 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activate background knowledge related to environmental problems by means of visual aids in order to understand a text.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	July 26 <sup>th</sup> -30 <sup>th</sup> and 31 <sup>st</sup>		Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	August 23 <sup>rd</sup> -27 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Predict information of a text using two pre reading strategies increasing a correlation between old and new ideas within a text.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	August 30 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve students' reading comprehension relating known and new information of a text by using two pre reading strategies.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema

	September 4 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• apply midterm test .</li> </ul>	
	September 11 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use K-W-L as a pre reading strategy before reading a text.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	September 20 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to use pre reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	September 24 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to use pre-reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	September 27 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to use pre-reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	October 2 <sup>nd</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to use pre-reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
	October 4 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to use pre-reading strategies for enhancing reading comprehension.</li> </ul>	Students' logs Teacher's Observation Schema
<b>Post-stage</b>	October 11 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview students.</li> </ul>	Focus group Interview
	November 8 <sup>th</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Find out students' reading level.</li> </ul>	Post test

## Chapter 5

### Data Analysis

This chapter will present a description of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis taking into account the theoretical guidelines on the concepts of mix-method approach and the concept of triangulation.

The mixed-method approach helps researchers to integrate qualitative and quantitative data to have a complete understanding of the research question and objectives of . Researchers view data from multiple perspectives to enhance and enrich the meaning of a singular perspective. (Creswell, 2011). Table 5 explains what type of data each instrument collected and the corresponding method of analysis.

**Table 5**

**Data collection Instruments, Type of Data and Data Analysis Method**

<b>Data Collection Instrument</b>	<b>Nature of data</b>	<b>Data Analysis Method</b>
Pre and post test	<b>Quantitative</b>	Descriptive and Inferential Statistics
Students' logs	<b>Qualitative</b>	Grounded theory
Teacher's observation schema	<b>Qualitative</b>	Grounded theory
Focus group interview	<b>Qualitative</b>	Grounded theory

The group of participants consisted of 39 learners; however, results of those 34 students who participated in the entire research process were considered in the analysis in order to have strong, valid, consistent and reliable results.

### Quantitative Analysis

The results of the pre and post-tests were compared by calculating the mean and its corresponding confidence interval, the standard deviation, and the median.

**Table 6**

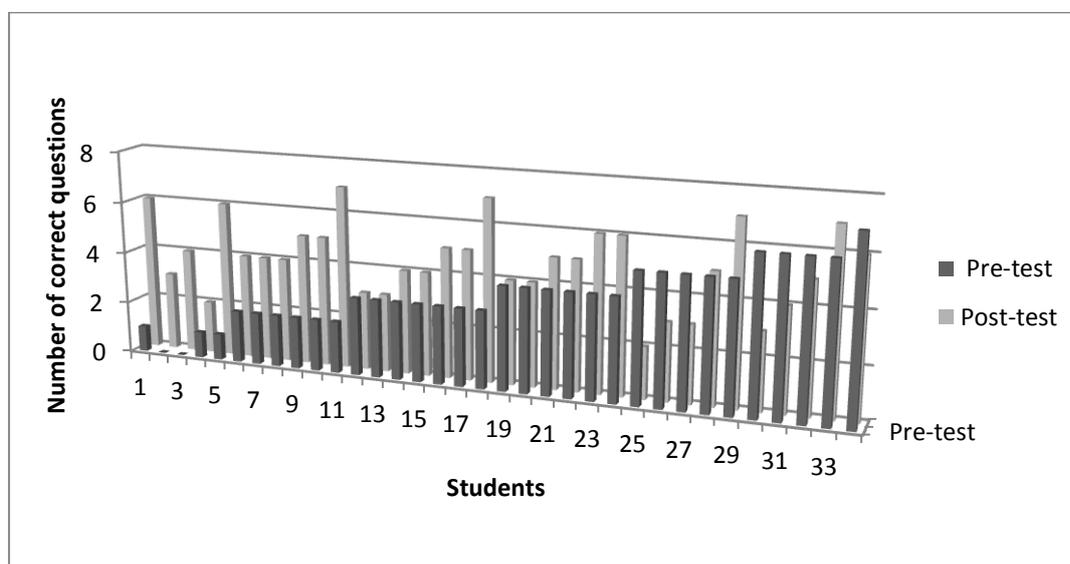
#### Descriptive Statistics Definitions

Mean	Confidence Interval	Standard Deviation	Median
<p><b>Average.</b> The sum of a set of data divided by the number of data.</p>	<p>A confidence interval is a range around a measurement that conveys how precise the measurement is.</p>	<p>Standard deviation is a statistical value used to determine how spread out the data in a sample is, and how close individual data points are to the mean — or average — value of the sample.</p>	<p>The middle value or the mean of the middle two values, when the data is arranged in numerical order.</p>

In addition to descriptive statistics, a t-test was run to compare the score mean of the two tests. This test helps the researcher find out if the means are significantly different from one another or relatively the same.

The test results show that the students' reading comprehension level improved to a certain extent. When the unit of analysis is the student, the results show that 22 students got a higher score in the posttest; 5 of them got the same result and 7 got a lower result (see appendix 8).

The following graph depicts the situation mentioned above: a comparison between the scores of each student for both the pre-test and the post –test. The graph also points out that the use of pre reading strategies helped 64,7% of the students to improve their results, especially low achievers.

**Graph 1 Comparison between the score of each student for the pre- test and post-test**


On the other hand, when the unit of analysis is the entire group, the statistical measures reported in table 8 show that the group advanced towards greater levels of understanding. The mean indicated that students went from answering 3 questions correctly to answering 5 (if numbers are rounded), which indicates progress in the students' performance as a result of the intervention. In addition the standard deviation decreased indicating that the scores are closer to each other, which means that the use of pre-reading strategies helped to shorten the gap between high and low achievers.

**Table 7**
**Pre and Post-test Statistical Measures.**

	Pre test	Post test
Mean	3,4 (2,7- 4,0) <sup>4</sup>	4,5 (4,0-4,9)
Standard Deviation	1,7	1,3
Median	3	4,5

<sup>4</sup> The values in brackets correspond to the lower and upper limits of the confidence interval.

After using descriptive statistics the information needed to be validated through the use of inferential statistics such as a t-test. This test determines if the score means for the pre-test and post-test are different enough so that results obtained using descriptive statistic are reliable. Table 9 indicates that there was a significant difference between the scores of the pre-test ( $M=3,4$ ,  $SD=1,7$ ) and those of the post-test ( $M= 4,5$ ,  $SD= 1,3$ ) as the p value, 0,00349924 is smaller than the alpha level, 0,05.; These results confirm that after the intervention, the students' reading comprehension improved.

**Table 8****T-test Parameters**

	<i>Variable 1</i>	<i>Variable 2</i>
Mean	3,41176471	4,58823529
Variance	3,2798574	2,00713012
Observations	34	34
Pearson's Correlation	0,10351616	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	33	
		-
T Stat	3,14564023	
P(T<=t) one tail	0,00174962	
Critical one tail	1,69236031	
P(T<=t) two tails	0,00349924	
Critical two tails	2,0345153	

According to the quantitative analysis most of the students increased their reading comprehension scores as a result of this intervention, which focused on teaching students how to approach a text by using different pre-reading strategies. The group as a whole improved as the students' average number of correct responses to the same test increased the variability among the results diminished.

Nevertheless, the individual analysis needs to be complemented since 14, 7% of students got the same score on the pre and post-test and 20, 5 % of the students got lower



score on the post-test. The qualitative analysis could help understand what happened with those students.

### Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data was gathered by means of three instruments: students' logs (appendix 9), teacher's observation schemas (appendix 10) and a focus group interview. The data obtained was analyzed following the principles of Grounded Theory in relation to two stages: open coding and axial coding. This section has two main parts: the explanation of the grounded theory approach and the specific reflections based on the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data.

First of all, the data was read line by line to start the coding process. Therefore, the researcher coded everything in order to conceptualize and categorize data; afterwards she re-revised the data and re-read the codes several times, she underlined with different colors common codes. Table 9 shows some codes derived from the data collection instruments data.

**Table 9**

#### Some Codes Sample Derived from Collection Instruments Data

Code	Instrument	Sample <sup>5</sup>
Strategies Usefulness	Students' logs ( different interventions)	I can use pre reading strategy in long texts for ICFES exam to understand the question
	Interview	I would use it with any text it does not matter if it is in English or Spanish

<sup>5</sup> All samples were translated into English.



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		It`s useful for ICFES exam.
Students` Enjoyment	Teacher`s observation schema	“students` visible effort to concentrate while reading; smile faces when doing the pre- reading activity”
Students` Interest	Interview	“ Interesting project important and cool topics ”
Text topics Contextualization	Students` log (second intervention)	“learning English with social studies and other subject topics it is better because we will learn two things”
Students` Willingness	Students` log (Fifth intervention sample)	“more Reading for home with a vocabulary list that the teacher thinks it is useful for us”
Students` Feelings	Students` log	“my attitude improved”
Students` Responsibility	Students` log	“I arrived late to class and I was lost”
Students` Improvement	Interview	“I made a lot of progress, I was more interested in.”
Students` Attitude	Students` log	“ cool, I have one more strategy”
Students` Performance	Student`s log	“I could know my strengths” “I understood better ”



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Expand knowledge	Teacher's observation schema	“ some words from the texts motivated students to ask for some concepts related to Geography and history , so I invited them to look for information. One of the students (Pablo) entered to Internet in his cell phone; he found some interesting information and shared it with the class”
Analysis	Students' log	“ I realized, I'm learning faster”
Reflection	Interview  Students' log	“ To choose the strategy that helps you more”  “ we have a deep knowledge ”
Lifelong learning	Students' log	“ When I would need Works for University thus I can go on in my studies”

Hence, Codes with the same color were grouped in order to identify their properties and dimensions. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998): properties are “characteristics of a category, the delineation of which defines and gives it meaning” and dimensions illustrate how each property can vary along a continuum” (Kolb, 2012 p. 84). When properties and

dimensions were identified, the researcher wrote some memos<sup>6</sup> and named a category (appendix 11)

After the open coding, the researcher had to refine and differentiate the categories because of their properties to identify a central phenomenon, explore causal conditions, specify strategies, identify the context and intervening condition; and delineate the consequences for the central phenomenon identified (Creswell, 1998; Straws, 1987).

Therefore, the researcher organized and grouped similar codes into categories or “families” to select those categories that seemed more relevant and which assured to answer the research question. After she identified conditions that give rise to that category, context, action/interaction strategies, consequences of those strategies and graphically showed the interrelations among them (appendix 12). Table 10 shows the main categories and subcategories raised.

**Table 10**

**Main Categories and Subcategories**

RESEARCH QUESTION	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
•What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the framework of Self-Directed Learning on the reading comprehension of low-proficiency public school students?	1. Project Implementation Effects.  2. Reading Comprehension Improvement	1.1. Lesson Planning 1.2. Teacher’s intervention 1.3. Safe environment building 1.4. Students’ involvement in the project  2.1. Benefits of Pre-reading strategies 2.2. Usefulness of Strategies

<sup>6</sup> They are written record of analysis (Bogoya, 2012).

RESEARCH QUESTION	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
<p>•What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the framework of Self-Directed Learning on the reading comprehension of low-proficiency public school students?</p>	<p>3. Reading Comprehension Problems</p> <p>4. Self- directed Learning</p>	<p>2.3. Contextualization of topics, vocabulary and grammar.</p> <p>2.4. Vocabulary Improvement</p> <p>2.5. Students' Skills Development</p> <p>3.1. Students' personal situations</p> <p>3.2 Raising awareness towards weaknesses.</p> <p>3.3 Practice of Pre-reading Strategies</p> <p>4.1. Improvement Students' self-confidence.</p> <p>4.2. Awareness of the effectiveness of Pre-reading Strategies</p> <p>4.3. Metacognitive awareness.</p> <p>4.4. Critical Thinking</p> <p>4.5. Lifelong Learning</p>

Furthermore each category represent the description of hypothetical relationships between categories and subcategories .A core category unites all the strands in order to



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provide an explanation of the behavior under study (Goulding, 1999) they give specific conditions that give rise to a phenomenon's occurrence (Moghaddam, 2006).

The project implementation effects category illustrates some changing processes inside the classroom (Goede & Villiers, 2003). Because of the project, the lesson plans were designed carefully giving more importance to the students than to the curriculum topics; this fact caused the teacher-researcher to "fall in love" with the process achieving a construction of a safe environment and a connection to students that encouraged them to get involved in the project.

The reading comprehension improvement category addresses to one of the research objectives<sup>7</sup>; directly it joined the consequences of the implementation of pre-reading strategies as outcome phenomena (Brown, Stevenson, Troiano & Schneider, 2002). For instance, all the students clearly identified the benefits pre-reading strategies could bring to them, even if the quantitative analysis did not show improvement their reading comprehension.

Accordingly, qualitative analysis shows that high achievers (64, 7% of the students) could connect their knowledge about a certain topic to the context of the text and established relationships with vocabulary and grammar to enhance reading comprehension. Furthermore, average achievers (14, 7 % of the students) and one student from the group<sup>8</sup> of low achievers asserted that they experienced the same as high achievers. As a matter of act, these students felt their reading comprehension improved although the quantitative data did not support that result.

In addition, the category of problems in reading comprehension illustrates why there was a group of low achievers (20, 5 % of the students). Although students were involved in the project, they focused their attention on identifying their problems with vocabulary, previous negative attitude towards reading and their lack of responsibility; hence they spent more time being aware of their weaknesses than on experiencing the important benefits pre-

<sup>7</sup> To improve low-proficiency students' reading comprehension by using some pre-reading strategies

<sup>8</sup> Student number 21, see Appendix 8



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reading strategies could provide. For instance, in their students' logs, they wrote ideas such as "so long way to adapt the strategies", "Difficult, I did not understand", lots of unknown vocabulary"

Their personal problems could affect their focus of attention too. For instance, two siblings, students 18 and 19 found out during the intervention that one of them was pregnant. As a result of this, she and her sister were mainly focused on the implications this situation brought to their personal context. After analyzing and revising the data to identify any information that could support the idea mentioned above, the following excerpt was found: "Sisters 18 and 19 arrived late, they seem bored" (Teacher observation schema July 26th). In addition some of the students' logs may show their reluctance towards the activities there are some comments like "no se ", "llegue tarde y me perdi", words such as "todo", "nada" as answers for the questions. These girls were influenced by their affective filter that impacts second language acquisition when a person whose attitudes are not optimal (Krashen, 1987).

Finally, the Self-directed Learning category addressed another research construct (SDL) and one of the research objectives<sup>9</sup>. In this respect, qualitative analysis shows that students could identify their need to improve their reading comprehension, they were able to use their experiences and knowledge when reading a text because of the implementation of pre-reading strategies and they had the opportunity to choose and implement strategies based on their personal needs and their knowledge of the strategy. The students also developed metacognitive awareness and critical thinking. Therefore, these learners reflected critically on different issues by means of the students' logs expressing awareness about their own learning concerns; they were able to understand and benefit from implicit pre-reading strategies use explanations and use them spontaneously in pursuance of a cognitive goal (Ellis, n.d.). Table 11 shows some students' excerpts in which students reflected on these topics.

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<sup>9</sup> To promote self-directed learning as a tool for personal and continuous improvement.

Table 11

## Students' Excerpts

Instrument	Excerpts
Students' logs	<p><i>“Clave poder entender, importante para poder entenderlo en ingles utilizo la estrategia”</i></p> <p><i>“Si ayuda un mundo de posibilidades de entender el texto”</i></p> <p><i>“Entiendo Ideas más profundas”</i></p> <p><i>“Desarrollando capacidad lectora”</i></p> <p><i>“Comprendiendo muchos textos”</i></p> <p><i>“Entendimos Por nosotros mismos si Podemos queremos”</i></p>
Interview	<p><i>“Encontrar la facilidad para entender el texto mejor”</i></p> <p><i>“Avance bastante y le puse como más interés”</i></p> <p><i>“Le ayudo más la lluvia de ideas- pre teaching vocabulary”</i></p> <p><i>“Ojala se use en diferentes asignaturas no solo en ingles”</i></p> <p><i>“leer textos en internet en inglés o español empleando la pre lectura facilitando la comprensión”</i></p> <p><i>“Se debe usar diferente estrategia para no aburrirse con la misma.”</i></p> <p><i>“No solo sirve en ingles sino en cualquier idioma porque no se trata de encontrar las palabras sino de comprender el texto”</i></p>

## Chapter 6

### Conclusions and pedagogical implications

Important answers appeared after analyzing, comparing and triangulating the data for the research question of this study: What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the framework of Self-Directed Learning on the reading comprehension of low-proficiency public school students? and for the objectives stated at the beginning of the research: to improve low-proficiency students' reading comprehension by using some pre-reading strategies.; to motivate and train students in the use of these strategies so that they become more skillful and confident when reading a text and to promote self-directed learning as a tool for personal and continuous improvement.

This research project is innovative; it provides important findings for teachers and researchers in relation to reading comprehension improvement and SDL.

As in other studies like Endo (2001); Mahecha (2011), Parviz (2006) and Quiroga (2010) this study demonstrates that the use of pre-reading strategies improved students' reading comprehension. On one hand, in this research study the use of brainstorming, visual aids, pre-questioning and K-W-L strategies helped students to prepare themselves before reading the actual material by activating their background knowledge in relation to the topic, and allowing them to make relations between the pre-reading activities and the reading itself. And on the other, pre-teaching vocabulary and pre-questioning let them know useful vocabulary and activate background knowledge for understanding the texts.

Besides it is important to address the role Spanish has in students' understanding of pre-reading strategies. Herrera (2010) and this research study used Spanish as a tool to support learners' understanding when using and modeling the pre-reading strategies.

Pre-reading strategies influenced most of the participants positively in the research. Before the intervention the group of participants was very passive, not very talkative, they were dependent learners, and even lacked self-confidence. During and after the intervention they changed, they talked more in class, they were more interested in improving all their language skills and they began to get more involved in their learning process. (Hiemstra, 1991)



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Furthermore, it is important to take into consideration that public schools do not have as many resources for English classes as private ones (Rivera ,2007) but studies carried out in public schools contexts Endo( 2001), Herrera(2010), Mahecha (2011), and Quiroga (2010) and the study described in this report show that students from low social levels can improve their reading comprehension just by changing routine paradigms from teacher centered to learner centered methodologies in order to enhance students' abilities and competences (Nunan,1999).

Hence, it is of paramount importance that public school teachers carry out action research projects in which they realize how some simple change would nurture teaching and learning practices in their particular contexts. For instance, this project "Improving the Reading Comprehension of Low Proficiency Students" innovated the way reading comprehension has been addressed at Jose de San Martin School, because it applied action research principles, framed the research within self-directed learning and showed powerful findings.

On the other hand, although students were motivated to learn and use pre-reading strategies in order to solve their reading comprehension problems; some students did not improve their reading comprehension according to quantitative analysis but were involved in the process of reflecting about their weaknesses, roles and personal issues towards learning; thus for the teacher- researchers cannot assume that because most of the group is doing well in tasks or activities every single learner will reach goals. Accordingly it is necessary that teachers observe, monitor, support, and assess permanently each lesson and each student' development in order to identify possible troubles to be solved. As in public schools groups of students are big it is necessary that teacher implement SDL strategies for assessing learning process in order to help the identification of weaknesses and learning problems by students themselves when the teacher cannot.

Furthermore, the SDL frame of the research provided students with a context of self-directed learning promotion. In each intervention learners had the opportunity to raise learning awareness, develop critical thinking and metacognitive awareness by reflecting about



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learning and teaching outcomes through the students' logs; they could clearly identify their problems and advances in their learning process. Besides, learners self-managed their learning from the eighth and to the twelfth intervention they chose and implemented the pre reading strategy that accomplished their needs (Brockett and Hiemstra, 1991) they had the power to decide what to do and how.

The previous fact enabled them to become more responsible within their learning process. When students feel important and are taken into account they show a positive attitude towards learning (Knowles, 1975), participants in this research felt curious, enthusiastic towards learning and important to be part of this project so they got easily involved in the activities and lessons.

Finally, this research project had a great impact on teacher-researcher's life and it shows valuable evidence of reading comprehension improvement and how SDL principles works in a real context useful for students and teachers at the Jose de San Martin School.

### **Limitations**

Theory is easily described in books but sometimes difficult to apply in context with real data. Although the teacher-researcher addressed different studies that followed grounded theory principles, she just focused on two stages of it: open coding and axial coding because more background, practice and time are needed to reach selective coding.

Moreover, descriptive and statistical analysis is not very easy to explain with technical terms, even when supported by theories and authors' ideas. In that way the teacher-researcher of any study should have permanent support of an expert to reach high levels of metacognition that allow her to use statistical language with no problems.

Finally, it would be useful if teacher-researcher had had more time for implementing more interventions with average and low achievers students in order that those students could improve their reading comprehension.



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### Further research

It would be interesting to replicate this study in a different grade level within a longer period of time using web based tools or others that involve technology to analyze what would happen.

Besides, studies including while and post reading strategies may give more ideas in relation to students' reading comprehension improvement, studying the effects of other reading strategies may support teaching-learning practice with useful tools.

Therefore it would be interesting and necessary to continue applying SDL principles within public school contexts to overcome students' lack of motivation towards learning few hours of class per week and amount of students in each classroom.

The following research questions are proposed:

- What the effects are of implementing pre, while and post reading strategies in a group of low proficiency students within the frame of self-directed learning?
- What are the effects that web based materials have on the levels of reading comprehension of low proficiency students within the frame of self-directed learning?
- What SDL features would a learner maintain after an action research implementation framed within SDL?

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## Appendixes

### Appendix 1

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READTHEORY

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

•• Reading Comprehension 44 Level 5

**Directions:** Read the passage. Then answer the questions below.

Many people like to eat pizza, but not everyone knows how to make it. Making the perfect pizza can be complicated, but there are lots of ways for you to make a more basic version at home.

When you make pizza, you must begin with the crust. The crust can be hard to make. If you want to make the crust yourself, you will have to make dough using flour, water, and yeast. You will have to knead the dough with your hands. If you do not have enough time to do this, you can use a prepared crust that you buy from the store.

After you have chosen your crust, you must then add the sauce. Making your own sauce from scratch can take a long time. You have to buy tomatoes, peel them, and then cook them with spices. If this sounds like too much work, you can also purchase jarred sauce from the store. Many jarred sauces taste almost as good as the kind you make at home.



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Now that you have your crust and your sauce, you need to add the cheese. Cheese comes from milk, which comes from cows. Do you have a cow in your backyard? Do you know how to milk the cow? Do you know how to turn that milk into cheese? If not, you might want to buy cheese from the grocery store instead of making it yourself.

When you have the crust, sauce, and cheese ready, you can add other toppings. Some people like to put meat on their pizza, while other people like to add vegetables. Some people even like to add pineapple! The best part of making a pizza at home is that you can customize it by adding your own favorite ingredients.

### Questions

1) The author's main purpose in writing this passage is to

- A. describe the history of pizza
- B. teach a healthier way to make pizza
- C. outline steps to make a basic pizza at home
- D. provide tips about how to make your pizza especially delicious

2) As used in paragraph 1, which word means the opposite of **complicated**?

- A. difficult
- B. simple
- C. easy
- D. manageable

3) As used in paragraph 3, which is the best synonym for **purchase**?

- A. forget
- B. buy
- C. ask
- D. cook

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4) In paragraph 3, the author writes, "Many jarred sauces taste almost as good as the kind you make at home." The purpose of this statement is to

- A. clarify a later statement
- B. provide an example
- C. clarify an earlier statement



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- D. support the previous paragraph
- 5) In paragraph 4, the author asks a series of questions in order to
- A. support the idea that most people cannot make homemade cheese
  - B. reinforce the idea that most people probably live on farms
  - C. prove that store-bought cheese tastes better than homemade cheese
  - D. emphasize the superiority of homemade cheese over store bought cheese
- 6) As used in paragraph 5, which is the best definition for **customize**?
- A. to make personal
  - B. to prepare for more than one
  - C. to eat while hot
  - D. to desire
- 7) According to the author, which of the following ingredients do you need to have ready before you can add the toppings?
- I. crust
  - II. sauce
  - III. cheese
- A. I only
  - B. I and II only
  - C. II and III only
  - D. I, II, and III
- 8) Which of the following words best describes how the author feels about making a pizza from scratch?
- A. helpful
  - B. understanding
  - C. enthusiastic
  - D. negative
- 9) Which of the following conclusions would work best at the end of this passage.
- A. Although the crust, sauce, and toppings are all important ingredients in pizza, it is clear that the cheese is most important. Therefore, be sure your cheese is homemade.
  - B. It can be understood that making your pizza from scratch should be avoided at all costs. Use store bought ingredients and save yourself a heap of trouble.

C. As you can see, cooking a pizza can be fun, but it can also be very expensive. But, as you can see, the best things are worth paying for.

D. Once you have prepared the crust, sauce, cheese, and toppings, you are ready to bake your pizza. I think you will see that making pizza at home can be a good alternative to purchasing it from the store.

### Answers and Explanations

#### 1) C

In the first paragraph, the author introduces the main idea. The author says, "Making the perfect pizza can be complicated, but there are lots of ways for you to make a more basic version at home." Here, the author tells us that he or she wants to give us some ways to make a more basic pizza at home. The author spends the rest of the passage outlining the steps we need to take to make the pizza. This means (C) is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices (A), (B), and (D). Therefore they are incorrect.

#### 2) B

**complicated** (*adjective*): difficult to explain, understand, or analyze.

In paragraph 1, the author says, "Making the perfect pizza can be complicated, but there are lots of ways for you to make a more basic version at home." Given that making pizza at home can be complicated or difficult, the author wants to explain a way that is more basic. So, the author wants to explain a way to make pizza that is basic, or not complicated. *Simple* is the only choice that means something similar to basic, or not complicated. Therefore (B) is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices (A), (C), and (D). Therefore they are incorrect.

#### 3) B

**purchase** (*verb*): to acquire through the payment of money or its equivalent; to buy.

The question asks us to find the best synonym. Synonyms are words that have nearly the same meanings. The author tells us that if making homemade tomato sauce sounds like too much work, we can "purchase jarred sauce from the store." Using context, we can understand that another word for *purchase* is *buy*. If you are unfamiliar with the word "purchase," you might

still be able to guess that people usually go to a store in order to buy things. Choice **(B)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**.

Therefore they are incorrect.

4) **C**

To answer this question correctly, it helps to use context. At the end of paragraph 3 the author writes, "If this sounds like too much work, you can also purchase jarred sauce from the store. Many jarred sauces taste almost as good as the kind you make at home." The author tells us that as a substitute for something that takes too much work, we can purchase jarred sauce. This may seem like a poor substitute, but the author explains that this is not necessarily the case; many jarred sauces taste almost as good as the kind you make at home. Using this information, we can understand that the purpose of the statement in question is to clarify an earlier statement. Choice **(C)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

5) **A**

In paragraph 4, the author asks the reader, "Do you have a cow in your backyard? Do you know how to milk the cow? Do you know how to turn that milk into cheese?" The author thinks that he or she knows the answer to these questions. The author thinks that you probably do not have a cow in your backyard, do not know how to milk a cow, and do not know how to turn milk in cheese. After all, not many people would answer these questions positively. Given that the author expects that most people would not answer positively to these questions, then it is fair to assume that most people are unable to make home-made cheese. The author's question is intended to be rhetorical, or perhaps even sarcastic. This means choice **(A)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

6) **A**

**customize** (*verb*): to build according to personal preferences or tastes.

In order to answer this question correctly, it helps to use context. In paragraph 5, the author says, "The best part of making a pizza at home is that you can customize it by adding your favorite ingredients." After the author says this, he or she continues to give examples: some people like to add vegetables, meat, or even pineapple. Since the author tells us that different

people like different things on their pizza, we can understand that the choice of toppings is personal, or special for each person. Therefore, you can *customize* things to make them *personal*. This lets us know that **(A)** is correct. The passage does not provide information to support choices **(B)**, **(C)**, and **(D)**. Therefore they are incorrect.

7) **D**

In paragraph 2, the author says, "When you make pizza, you must begin with the crust." This comes before the author instructs you to add the toppings. This supports **option (I)**. In paragraph 3, the author says, "After you have chosen your crust, you must then add the sauce." This comes before the author instructs you to add the toppings. This supports **option (II)**. In paragraph 4, the author says, "Now that you have your crust and your sauce, you need to add the cheese." This comes before the author instructs you to add the toppings. This supports **option (III)**. Therefore **(D)** is correct.

8) **D**

In paragraph 2 the author writes, "If you want to make the crust yourself, you will have to make dough using flour, water, and yeast. You will have to knead the dough with your hands.." In paragraph 3 the author writes, "Making your own sauce from scratch can take a long time. You have to buy tomatoes, peel them, and then cook them with spices." In paragraph 4 the author writes, "Do you have a cow in your backyard? Do you know how to milk the cow? Do you know how to turn that milk into cheese?" In all of these quotations, the author talks about how hard it is to make a pizza from scratch. The author uses negative language to highlight this difficulty. This lets us know that the author is feels negative about making pizza from scratch. Choice **(D)** is correct. Choices **(A)**, **(B)**, and **(C)** all contain positive words. However, the author is negative about making a pizza from scratch. Therefore these choices are incorrect.

9) **D**

A good conclusion restates the main idea and the basic points (or thesis) of the passage. In paragraph 1 the author introduces the idea of making a pizza at home. In paragraph 2 the author talks about the crust. In paragraph 3 the author talks about the sauce. In paragraph 4 the author talks about the cheese. In paragraph 5 the author talks about the toppings. Using



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this information, we can understand that **(D)** is correct. **(A)** is incorrect because the passage does not provide information to support the idea that cheese is the most important ingredient in pizza. Although the author does advise against making your own ingredients, this is not the main idea of the passage. Therefore **(B)** is incorrect. The author does not talk about the cost of making pizza in this passage. Therefore **(C)** is incorrect.

## Appendix 2

School's Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Student's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Fill in the following log according to your perceptions and feelings. Remember this is not for marking.

1. Thoughts before the activity

2. Activities description before reading

3. Name of the strategy you use

4. Your performance description



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5. Your opinion about the activities

6. Activities usefulness for understanding the text

7. Possibilities of using the strategy on your own

8. Other feelings or thoughts about (materials, teacher's instructions/attitude/ performance, topic of the text)

9. Suggestions



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### Appendix 3

#### I.E.D. TECNICO COMERCIAL JOSE DE SAN MARTIN

#### Students' Reading Log

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What pre-reading strategy did you use? Please explain it. (¿Qué estrategia de pre lectura usaste?)

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2. Has the new pre-reading strategy helped you to understand better the text? Why? ( ¿La estrategia de pre lectura te ayudó a entender mejor el texto? ¿ Por qué?

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3. How can you apply this strategy again? ( ¿ Cómo y cuándo puedes aplicar esta estrategia? )

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4. Other feelings or thoughts about: ( Otras ideas acerca de)

(Materials, teacher's instructions/attitude/performance, topic of the text)

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#### Appendix 4

#### TEACHER'S OBSERVATION SCHEMA – Maria Isabel Romero Rute

What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the frame of Self-Directed Learning on low proficiency public school students' reading comprehension?

DATE:	GROUP (	TIME: 5 <sup>th</sup>	SPECIAL SITUATION:	STRATEGY APPLIED:	GOAL:
ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION : .					
MATERIALS:					
GENERAL OUTCOMES:					
POSITIVE EVIDENCES: .					
Number of students that participate in the task:  Motivation (special situation):  SDL: Number of students that participate in reflection:  Reading Speed (time of reading):  While-reading strategies: .  Other evidences:					
DIFICULTIES					



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OTHER COMMENTS:

## Appendix 5

### Focus Group Interview

Welcome statement:

- o Thanks for participating.
- o Everything you say here will be confidential.
- o There are no right or wrong answers.
- o We want to hear from everyone.
- o Feel free to share your opinions openly.
- o For accuracy reasons only, we will be recording this discussion.

Well, we are going to talk about your point of view about the pre-reading strategies implementation.

1. What difficulties do you have when reading a text?
2. To what extent have pre-reading strategies helped you to improve your reading comprehension?
3. Do you like to use the reading log? Why
4. Would you like to share any personal experience or anecdote during this research project?



## Appendix 6

### Consent letters sample

Tabio Cundinamarca 1 de Julio 2012

**Mg Nubia Isabel Rojas Carrillo**

**Rectora**

**I.E.D. Técnico José de San Martín**

Respetada Rectora:

Respetuosamente solicito su autorización para llevar a cabo en la institución un proyecto de investigación con el curso 11 E en el área de lectura. Ya que como es de su conocimiento estoy realizando la maestría “Master in English Language Teaching for Self-directed Learning” con la Universidad de La Sabana y Anaheim University en la cual como parte del programa y el interés por promover la investigación los docentes participantes guiados por importantes tutores debemos realizar tal proyecto con un grupo de estudiantes a nuestro cargo. El estudio hace parte de un macro proyecto a nivel nacional que busca presentar las estrategias de enseñanza del Inglés en Colombia promoviendo el auto aprendizaje.

Debido a los bajos niveles de comprensión lectora en los estudiantes de nuestra institución evidenciados en los resultados de las pruebas internas y externas quise implementar un proyecto en lectura en el que se busca ver cuales son los efectos de la aplicación de algunas estrategias de pre-lectura en el mejoramiento de la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes del grado 11E .

El proyecto se ha venido trabajando desde el año pasado en su fase de planeación ahora debemos pasar a la implementación en la que se realizan los siguientes pasos: 1. Diagnostico 2. Aplicación de 12 actividades empleando estrategias de pre-lectura, 3. Recolección de datos empleando Students’ Log, Teacher’s Observation Schema 4. Análisis de los datos. Los datos personales de los estudiantes no serán publicados y se pedirá autorización de los padres de familia para que sus hijos participen en el proyecto.

Esta investigación aportara a los presentes proyectos que tiene la institución LEA y PILE , contribuirá positivamente en la formación de los estudiantes y dará luces para encontrar nuevas metodologías que guíen a los estudiantes hacia el mejoramiento continuo promoviendo autonomía , responsabilidad y compromiso en su proceso de aprendizaje.



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Agradezco su atención.

Atentamente,

María Isabel Romero Rute

Lic. Filología e Idiomas Ingles.

Tabio Cundinamarca 1 de Julio 2012

**Apreciados Padres de Familia**

**Estudiantes Grado 11 E**

**José de San Martin**

Cordial Saludo,

Como parte de los estudios que adelanto en la Maestría “Master in English Language Teaching for Self- directed Learning” con la Universidad de La Sabana y Anaheim University tengo el interés de iniciar un proyecto investigativo en el grado que su hijo(a) cursa actualmente. Dicho proyecto busca aplicar algunas estrategias para mejorar la comprensión lectora de los estudiantes. De igual manera, el presente estudio contribuirá al desarrollo académico del estudiante, su mejoramiento continuo promoviendo autonomía, responsabilidad y compromiso en su proceso de aprendizaje.

La información que se obtenga de este proyecto investigativo servirá solamente para fines educativos y las identidades de los estudiantes se mantendrán en estricta confiabilidad. Para recolectar la información se utilizaran encuestas, test de comprensión lectora y reflexiones de los estudiantes.

Agradezco de antemano su colaboración e interés,

María Isabel Romero Rute

Docente de Inglés grado 11 E.



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Yo \_\_\_\_\_, padre/madre

de \_\_\_\_\_ autorizo

a mi hijo (a) hacer parte del proyecto de investigación “ Improving Reading Comprehension in low proficiency students”

Fecha \_\_\_\_\_ Firma \_\_\_\_\_

### Annex 7 Worksheet Sample

#### I.E.D TECNICO JOSE DE SAN MARTIN

#### English Reading Worksheet 11° E

Choose the pre Reading strategy that you prefer:

1. Pre teaching Vocabulary

Biopsy	Implant
Bizarre	Kitten
Canine	Puppy
Cell	Steep
Clone	Stray
Culture	Twin
Donor	Wean
Facility	Beloved
Handle	birth

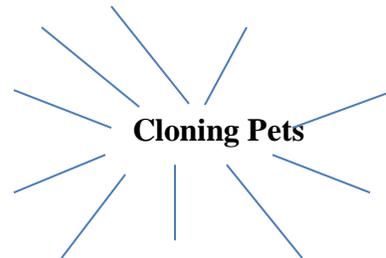


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2. Brainstorming

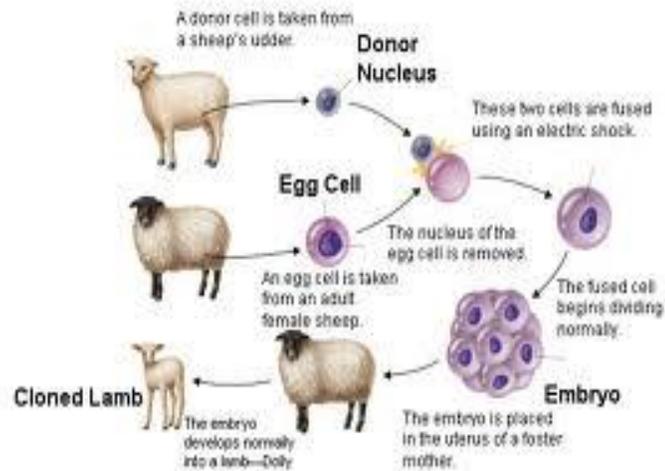
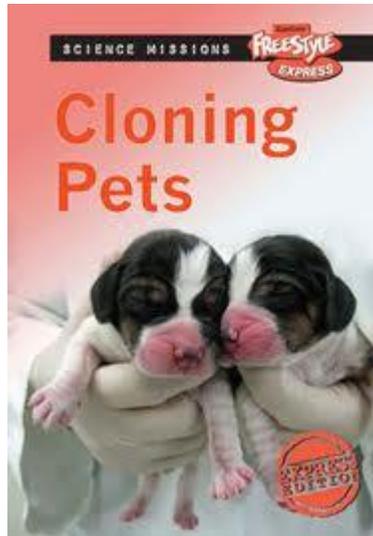


3. K-W-L

What do you about cloning?	What do you want to know about cloning?	What did you learn about cloning?

4. Visual Aids : What can you say about the pictures?





## 5. Pre- questioning

Read the following questions, reflect and answer:

- What is cloning?
- What is the cloning process like?
- Would you clone your pet? Why?

### Cloning Pets

A company in Phoenix, Arizona, says that it can now clone your cat. “Actually,” said Felix Lee, President of Twice Is Nice, Inc., “you don’t even have to wait until your beloved cat dies. We already have clients whose clone lives with its donor.”

The price is steep. A clone of your cat will cost \$50,000. First, your veterinarian must do a biopsy of your cat. This is sent to TwIN, Inc., where it is cultured to grow fresh new cells. These new cells are stored in liquid nitrogen until you notify TwIN, Inc., that you are ready for the clone. At this time, you pay half the amount (\$25,000). A cultured cell is implanted into a female cat that is in estrus, and if all goes well, a kitten is born about 60 days later. The new kitten is weaned in about eight weeks. TwIN, Inc. delivers the kitten to you after it receives the remaining \$25,000.



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“We are a growing company,” said Lee. “Our facility can handle about a dozen births a year now, but our goal is to produce about 50 kittens and 50 puppies a year.” The company is currently experimenting with stray dogs. Some canine clones seem to be perfect, but some have been bizarre. Nevertheless, Lee believes that they will be successfully cloning dogs in about a year

**Appendix 8 Pre and Posttest students’ scores**

Student	Pre test result	Post test result
1	1	6
2	7	6
3	4	5
4	4	5
5	3	4
6	1	2
7	2	5
8	6	4
9	6	5
10	3	7
11	4	4
12	3	5
13	6	3
14	5	3
15	4	4
16	5	3
17	2	7
18	3	3
19	3	3



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20	2	4
21	5	2
22	5	7
23	0	4
24	4	6
25	3	5
26	4	6
27	6	7
28	2	5
29	0	3
30	3	4
31	2	4
32	1	6
33	5	5
34	2	4

	Students who improved the results	22
	Students whose results do not change	5
	Students whose results decreased.	7
		34

### Appendix 9

Students'  
logs filled-in  
samples



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I.E.D. TECNICO COMERCIAL JOSE DE SAN MARTIN

Students' Reading Log

NAME: Milena Ramirez Ibañez DATE: 23-Agosto/12

1. What pre-reading strategy did you use? Please explain it. (Que estrategia de pre lectura usaste?)

Primero recordar la lluvia de ideas  
después emplear conocimientos

2. Has the new pre-reading strategy helped you to understand better the text? Why? (La estrategia de pre lectura te ayudo a entender mejor el texto? Po que?)

Si porque voy enfocando nuestras demás  
actividades

3. How can you apply this strategy again? (Como y cuando puedes aplicar esta estrategia?)

Recordando vocabulario, leer mucho y se puede  
aplicar siempre y en todos los temas

4. Other feelings or thoughts about: (Otras ideas acerca de)

(Materials, teacher's instructions/attitude/performance, topic of the text)

¡all so ok!

I.E.D. TECNICO COMERCIAL JOSE DE SAN MARTIN

Students' Reading Log

NAME: Claudia Quintana DATE: August 23<sup>rd</sup>

1. What pre-reading strategy did you use? Please explain it. (Que estrategia de pre lectura usaste?)

Lluvia de ideas, pues es una estrategia muy  
interesante.

2. Has the new pre-reading strategy helped you to understand better the text? Why? (La estrategia de pre lectura te ayudo a entender mejor el texto? Po que?)

Si me ayudo en alguna parte, pero por otra no  
porque había vocabulario que no conocía

3. How can you apply this strategy again? (Como y cuando puedes aplicar esta estrategia?)

En lecturas.

4. Other feelings or thoughts about: (Otras ideas acerca de)

(Materials, teacher's instructions/attitude/performance, topic of the text)

El tema es muy interesante porque es algo que vemos  
en algunas cosas nuevas, la actitud de la



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**Appendix 10 Teacher's Observation Schema filled-in sample**

**TEACHER'S OBSERVATION SCHEMA 5- Maria Isabel Romero Rute**

What are the effects of using pre-reading strategies within the frame of Self-Directed Learning on low proficiency public school students' reading comprehension?

DATE: August 23 <sup>rd</sup> -27 <sup>th</sup>	GROUP (No.Sts) 11 E	TIME: second hour; third hour.	SPECIAL SITUATION: we have to classes for the complete lesson.	STRATEGY APPLIED: Visual aids Brainstorming	GOAL: To predict information of a text using two pre reading strategies increasing a correlation between old and new ideas within a text.
ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION: " Extreme Sports" They watch a video related to extreme sports, we all write on the board different ideas about the topic. They read the text individually, answer some questions .Look for information about one different extreme sport and present it in class in pairs ( moving circle- class is divided into two, they stand up in two circles)					
MATERIALS: photocopies, books, video beam, computer, internet.					
GENERAL OUTCOMES: It was easy for them to understand the text. Pre reading strategies activated students' background knowledge related to the topic.					
POSITIVE EVIDENCES: Students enjoy the topic; get easily involved in the activity					
Number of students that participate in the task: 35  Motivation (special situation)  SDL: Number of students that participate in reflection: 35  Reading Speed (time of reading): 15 minutes					



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<p>Pre-reading strategies used: pre- questioning</p> <p>While-reading strategies: it was not visible.</p> <p>Other evidences: students' visible effort to concentrate while reading; smile faces when doing pre- reading activity</p>
<p>DIFICULTIES: some students did not look for more information by themselves.</p>
<p>OTHER COMMENTS: students' log changed so Students are happy because is shorter and easier to fill in. They love innovation.</p>

**Appendix 11 Codes grouping, Dimensions Properties and Categories Sample**

Codes	Properties	Dimensions	Memo	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal likes</li> <li>• ongoing work</li> <li>• future life use</li> <li>• link to other context (work, school, university)</li> <li>• usefulness for life</li> </ul>	<p>Related characteristics to students' life project</p>	<p>Low and high levels</p>	<p>Students are relating the benefits pre reading strategies use to their current and future personal lives.</p>	<p>Lifelong learning</p>

Codes	Properties	Dimensions	Memo	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal problems</li> <li>• personal negative disposition</li> <li>• understanding problems</li> <li>• lack of vocabulary</li> <li>• Text complexity</li> </ul>	<p>Low achievers Internal feelings</p>	<p>All students - some students</p>	<p>Although low achievers feel they have problems with the activities, they can realize the causes of this.</p>	<p>Raising awareness towards weaknesses</p>



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			Being also involved in the framework of SDL.	
--	--	--	--	--

Codes	Properties	Dimensions	Memo	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance students – topic- project</li> <li>good attitude</li> <li>use English</li> <li>positive attitude towards the activity</li> <li>teacher empathy</li> <li>Many positive points of view</li> </ul>	Motivational impact generated by the context	Average and high levels.	It is interesting to observe how safe environments encourage students to get involved in the activities, reflect about what happen around them and increase their motivation for learning.	Students' enrollment in the project.

Codes	Properties	Dimensions	Memo	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Willingness of improvement</li> <li>addresses learning style</li> <li>reading better</li> <li>more understanding</li> <li>Clearer ideas</li> </ul>	Personal responsibility with their learning	Starting and ongoing level.	Students identify the benefits pre-reading strategies give them when reading texts.	Learning awareness on Pre-reading strategies effectiveness

Codes	Properties	Dimensions	Memo	Category
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Class suggestions</li> <li>methodology</li> <li>frequency</li> </ul>	Students' ideas for class	High and average percentage	Students give opinions about how the class could be	



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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• topics</li> </ul>			<p>encouraged by the project and its implementation.</p>	
--	--	--	--	--

Appendix 12 Axial Coding Sample Graphs

