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Guessing Vocabulary as a Strategy to Improve Students’ Reading Skill

Procesos de Enseñanza-Aprendizaje del Inglés en el Sistema Educativo Público Mexicano

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ABSTRACT

It is commonly said that secondary school students do not use strategies for dealing with vocabulary, especially for unknown words. However, such statement is not true at all. For instance, students asking for the meaning of an unknown word, either to the English teacher or to a partner, reveal that, consciously or unconsciously, they are applying a vocabulary learning strategy. Special attention should be devoted to vocabulary guessing strategies. This is because those strategies may allow students to have an idea about the meaning of the unknown word easier than looking up the Spanish equivalent in a bilingual dictionary. Therefore, vocabulary guessing strategies might let students not to interrupt their reading so as not to lose the information they are getting from the text.

The present research is a qualitative case study. The main reason for developing a case study is because my main concern on the research project is to make a proposal for improving the teaching-learning of English in the public secondary school where I work. Results show that the vocabulary guessing strategies that the participants applied were paraphrasing sections of the text while checking for L1 cognates, using internal or external clues when guessing from textual context, and the use of background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates.

Key Words: reading, vocabulary, guessing
INTRODUCTION

It is known that second language learning implies the mastering of the four language skills; speaking, writing, listening and reading. However, according to general knowledge in the field of English as a foreign language teaching, the most frequent language skill that students find difficult to master seems to be reading. This may be because they find words that are unknown for them. Therefore, reading a text in English is a difficult task for them. Furthermore, one crucial factor for students to become proficient in reading texts in English is the amount of vocabulary they possess. Research shows that learners need to know approximately 98 percent of the words in written or spoken discourse in order to understand it well (Nation, 2006, in Schmitt, 2008). However, besides these facts, vocabulary acquisition or learning can be regarded as the biggest problem for most learners (Cheung, 2004). Therefore, it seems that vocabulary learning is currently receiving attention in second language pedagogy and research (Hatch, 1983; Zimmerman, 1997, in Bornay, 2011). But it is still a contentious issue how learners learn vocabulary effectively and efficiently or how it can best be taught. In the light of these arguments, it is necessary to explore how foreign language learners deal with unknown vocabulary, especially secondary school students in Mexico. This is because to date there is no published empirical studies on Mexican secondary school students’ use of vocabulary strategies, so this study pretends to shed light on this subject.

The purpose of this research was to identify the vocabulary guessing strategies three students from a group of second grade students of a public secondary school located in the outskirts of Xalapa, Veracruz used to deal with a common reading difficulty, which was dealing with unknown vocabulary, when they were required to read a passage. This research sought, therefore, to gain understanding of this situation by conducting a qualitative case study, in which the findings resulting from this investigation can be transformed into a pedagogical proposal for the Mexican English language teachers who work at a public secondary school in order for them to apply and evaluate its usefulness.
This research report is organized in four chapters. Chapter one provides a review of the literature so as to facilitate the understanding of the relationship between reading and vocabulary and the strategies readers can apply in order to sort out the problems that emerge owe to unknown words. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first one explains the relationship between reading and vocabulary. The second section is devoted to learning strategies, especially reading strategies and vocabulary learning strategies. Chapter Two explains the research method, the setting of this research, the participants, the research instrument, an explanation about how this research was carried out, and how the framework for analyzing the data was constructed. In Chapter three, the collected data are analyzed. Chapter four discusses the data obtained, as well as gives an account of a pedagogical proposal that emerged from this study. Finally, recommendations are made about the reasons why to teaching vocabulary guessing strategies to overcome the common reading problem, which was to deal with unknown vocabulary.
CONTEXT AND FOCUS

Context

The context in which the present research took place was the public education system in Mexico. According to the Mexican Ministry of Education (SEP) website, this system is classified into three types of education: basic education, upper-secondary education and tertiary education. Basic Education is sub-classified into three levels: pre-primary, primary and lower-secondary. Pre-primary education includes three levels: the first, for three-year-old children; the second, for four-year-old children; and the third, for five-year-old children. Primary school is taught in six grades. It is provided to children from age six to fewer than 15 years old. It should be completed—which is evidenced by an official certificate—to enter into lower-secondary education. Lower-secondary school is made up of three grades. It should be completed—which is evidenced by an official certificate—to enter into upper-secondary school. The three basic educations are compulsory. Upper-secondary education encompasses high school and professional technical education. High school is a three-year program, but there exist two and four-year curricula. The corresponding certificate is required to enter into tertiary education. Professional technical education consists of a three-year curriculum, but there are some programs that have duration of two to five years. It is intended to train students for technical employment; therefore, it has a terminal character but with an option to continue with tertiary education through the accreditation of additional subjects. Finally, tertiary education is studied after upper-secondary education and is classified into three levels: higher technician (trains technically skilled professionals for working in a specific discipline with a two-year curriculum); bachelor’s degree (studied in technological institutes, universities and teachers’ colleges within a four-year curriculum or longer); postgraduate studies (requiring a bachelor’s and academic degree to enrolling in it and is sub-classified into specialization studies, master’s degrees and doctoral degrees).

The type of education in which this research was developed was basic education, specifically in lower-secondary school. According to the SEP, students who attend
lower-secondary school—commonly named secondary school—are enrolled in nine compulsory subjects per school year. Within the nine subjects it is English as a foreign language. According to the SEP English as a foreign language syllabus, the **object of study a foreign language in secondary** is for students to participate in certain “social practices of language”, both oral and written, in their own or in a foreign country in contact with native and non-native speakers of English. Therefore, SEP English syllabus focuses on what it is that expert language users do when interpreting and producing oral and written texts, preserving the social function of such acts.

Additionally, the number of hours available for the teaching of a foreign language—three hours per week—restricts the level that students can reach upon conclusion of basic education, and thus delimits the purposes that can be reasonably set. Given that a school term has 200 working days (40 weeks), the three weekly sessions (45–50 minutes each) make a total of 90 to 100 hours of study per grade. This means that after 3 years of secondary education students will have studied English for 270–300 hours. Therefore, it is expected that by the end of basic education students should reach, as a minimum, a level equivalent to A2, waystage (SEP, 2006).

**Focus**

The present research focused on exploring and describing which guessing strategies secondary school students use for getting the meaning of unknown words when reading a text. It is commonly said that secondary school students do not use strategies for dealing with vocabulary, especially for unknown words. However, such statement is not true at all. Students asking for the meaning of an unknown word, either to the English teacher or to a partner, reveal that, consciously or unconsciously, they are applying a vocabulary learning strategy. The same is true for students who use a dictionary in order to look up the Spanish equivalent of the unknown word. Special attention should be devoted to guessing the meaning of an unknown word from surrounding words or ideas. This is because this strategy allows students to understand easier than looking up the Spanish equivalent of an unknown word. Therefore, it lets students not to interrupt their reading so as not to
lose the information they are getting from the text. Finally, knowing which strategies learners use for dealing with unknown vocabulary allow teachers to supply their students with resources for making a reading task an easy one.

**Objective**

The present study has three objectives:

1. To explore which vocabulary strategies secondary school students use for getting the meaning of unknown words when reading a text.
2. To identify which guessing strategies secondary school students use for getting the meaning of unknown words when reading a text.
3. To make a proposal in which secondary school students are taught how to guess the meaning of unknown words.

**Research Question**

The Research questions are:

Why is guessing vocabulary a strategy that may help students improve their reading skill?

How can guessing vocabulary improve students’ reading skill?

**Rationale**

The present research deals with a topic that may be of great interest for Mexican English teachers of basic education, especially for secondary school English teachers. This is because it can be observed that secondary students reading a text written in English may face some difficulties when encounter a word which meaning they do not know. Due to this fact, students may claim that reading a text in English is a difficult task to develop. However, if secondary students are taught vocabulary learning strategies, especially guessing strategies, they might find easier to read a text written in English. Therefore, secondary students may find achievable to interpret and produce a written text like an expert language user (SEP, 2006).
Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, such type of study had been developed in Hungary (Dóczi, 2011) and in China (Cheung, 2004). In Mexico, only Marín (2005) study within Mexican university EFL learners was available. However, to date there are no published empirical studies on Mexican secondary school students’ use of vocabulary learning strategies. Consequently, it was necessary to start by looking into the EFL situation in secondary school in Mexico.
CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Reading and vocabulary

Vocabulary knowledge should be considered as a key to reading and reading skills development (Chall, 1987; Stanovich, 1986, in Stoller & Grabe, 1995). This is because by means and as a result of reading, vocabulary can be developed (Stoller & Grabe, 1995). Furthermore, research has shown second language readers, in order to efficiently understand a reading passage, relay deeply on vocabulary knowledge –i.e. recalling and inferring word’s meaning- and that a lack of vocabulary knowledge is the largest obstacle for second-language readers to overcome (Huckin & Bloch, 1995; Stoller & Grabe, 1995).

As a consequence, language learners should apply vocabulary language strategies when encounter unknown vocabulary. For instance, learners can study the word-form itself to see if they recognize any of its parts. If they did, they would generate a hypothesis as to what the word might mean (Huckin & Bloch, 1995). Additionally, learners can make successful guesses at the meaning of unknown words when they encounter them in a rich and meaningful context –i.e. context-based strategies-, and especially when they have good background knowledge of the material being studied (as long as this background knowledge does not conflict with information in the text) (Huckin & Bloch, 1995; Parry, 1995).

Finally, experiential knowledge –i.e. background knowledge- may help the learners both to generate and to evaluate their word meaning guesses. That is to say, the reader samples the clues in the text and reconstructs a mental representation of what he or she thinks the text says (Nation & Coady, 1995). However, background knowledge can interfere with the learning of new word meaning when readers overemphasize illustrations or situations which connect with their knowledge of the world. As a consequence, the unknown word might be mistakenly identified or the word meaning is not gotten or retained, which may lead to serious problems of comprehension (Huckin & Bloch, 1995; Nation & Coady, 1995).
1.2 Learning strategies

Learning strategies is a concept that emerged in the field of English language learning in the 70’s when research about characteristics of good language learners was carried out. “It all began by trying to find the steps taken by [good language learners] so teachers could make use of the findings to help the less able learners to better their performance” (Méndez, 2007, p. 113). Since then, research on this subject has increased tremendously.

Different authors have given their own definition of learning strategies. For instance, Oxford (1990, p.8) argues that learning strategies are “specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations”. This definition implies that learning strategies are chosen, consciously or unconsciously, by learners according to the language task they are performing. The aim at using such strategies is to help learners to comprehend, learn, or retain new information (O’Malley & Chamot, 1996; Cook, 1996, in Méndez, 2007; Cohen 1998, in Dóczi, 2011).

1.2.1 Language learning strategies

In the field of second language learning, there is no unanimity in the definition of language learning strategies (Llaven & Farmer, 2007, in Méndez, 2012). However, there are some elements in common within definitions given by different authors (Wenden & Rubin, 1987, and Weden, 1991, in Lai, 2005; Oxford, 1990; Cook, 1996, in Méndez, 2007). Language learning strategies can be defined as conscious or unconscious choices that learners make while learning or using the second language. Furthermore, since such strategies are properly and independently chosen and applied by the learners themselves, they contribute to autonomous learning.

Finally, Oxford (1990) and O’Malley and Chamot (1985, in Schmitt, 1997) have established two different, but complementary, language learning strategies classification. Integrating in one system both classifications, it can be seen the
resulting categories: metacognitive (strategies for overviewing the process of language use and learning); cognitive (strategies which involve the manipulation of information in an immediate task for the purpose of acquiring or retaining the information); memory (strategies used for understanding and recalling new information); social/affective (strategies dealing with interpersonal relationships and those which deal with controlling one’s emotional constraints); and compensation (strategies used by learners for overcoming knowledge gaps and contributing to communicate authentically).

1.2.2 Reading strategies

Reading strategies can be defined as “the cognitive processes that a reader uses in making sense of a text” (Mikulecky, 2008, p.3). It is presumably that reading strategies are employed unconsciously and automatically. Moreover, when readers are confronted with a challenging text, they should analyze and apply the strategies of experienced readers (Wallace 1992, Upton, 2004).

According to O’Malley and Chamot (1996), strategies can be classified in three general branches: cognitive; metacognitive; and social and affective strategies. Such system was adopted by Zárate (2012) who proposed the following classification:

a. Cognitive strategies

These kinds of strategies are related to specific learning tasks. For this reason, they are also known as “cognitive monitoring skills” (Cohen, 1994 in Macola 2007, p.107). Some cognitive strategies include translation; contextualization or placing a phrase in a meaningful language sequence; and using the available information to guess the meaning of new items or inferencing. Additionally, there are other cognitive strategies such as skimming and scanning, identifying main ideas, analyzing vocabulary, and writing a summary (O’Malley, 1985 in Brown, 2001).

b. Socio-Affective Strategies

These kinds of strategies have to do with interacting with others, for example cooperating and questioning for clarification (Brown, 2001). Thus, students’ attitudes towards reading might be influenced, either positively or negatively, by
factors belonging to the affective domain, such as values, motivation, feelings and attitude (Espinosa, 2008).

c. Metacognitive Strategies

These kinds of strategies are related to planning in advance how to deal with a task, self-monitoring how one is carrying out a task, and what one can do to overcome problems that emerge during the execution of a task. In sum, these strategies involve an “executive function” (Brown, 1994, p. 115), which implies a mental process by which a reader is aware of what he or she is reading and thinking.

1.2.3 Vocabulary learning strategies

Vocabulary learning can be defined as learning a package of sub-sets of words as well as learning how to use strategies to cope with unknown or unfamiliar words (Siriwan, 2007, in Rahimy & Shams, 2012). Thus, here it is the foundation of the concept of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (commonly abbreviated VLS). Different authors in this field (Kafipour & Naveh, 2011; Takač, 2008, in Dóczi, 2011; Lai, 2005; Intaraprasert, 2004, in Rahimy and Shams, 2012; Nation, 2001) have given their definition of Vocabulary Learning Strategies (henceforth VLS). In general terms, VLS are one part of language learning strategies which in turn are part of general learning strategies. They can be understood as any set of tools, techniques or learning behaviors, which language learners use independently to understand the meaning of a new word, to restore the knowledge of newly-learned words, and to expand one’s knowledge of vocabulary. Additionally, it is believed that a large amount of vocabulary can be learned acquired by using vocabulary learning strategies (Nation, 2001).

There are some important issues related to VLS use and instruction. First, VLS are employed for encountering new words –i.e. unknown words-. Then, they help language learners to learn the meaning of the words. Therefore, they help learners in making a strong memory connection between the forms and the meanings of the words so that these can be used when necessary –e.g. reading a text-, which make learning and using vocabulary in L2 more efficient (Takač, 2008, in Dóczi, 2011;
Brown & Payne, 1994, in Kafipour & Naveh, 2011). Finally, VLS require selection on the learners’ part; they depend upon learners’ understanding and can be further developed through instruction (Takač, 2008, in Dóczi, 2011).

On the other hand, VLS have been classified by authors such as Schmitt (1997) and Nation (2001). They list the strategies that seem the most appropriate for their criteria. For instance, Schmitt (1997) provides a list that can be extended to at least fifty-eight VLS (see Appendix A), organized into five categories divided into two main groups, namely: Discovery strategies, which embrace Determination Strategies (they imply guessing an unknown word’s meaning), and Consolidation Strategies which comprise Memory Strategies (they are useful for relating a new word to previous knowledge); Cognitive strategies (they include repetition and using mechanical means to study vocabulary); and Metacognitive Strategies (students use them for controlling and evaluating their own learning). It is important to mention that there is a category called Social Strategies (they require social interaction among learners) that is in both groups, Determination and Consolidation (strategies).

Moreover, Nation (2001) VLS classification tries to separate aspects of vocabulary knowledge (what is involved in knowing a word) from sources of vocabulary knowledge, and learning processes. Therefore, he established three general class of strategies (see Appendix A), named: planning vocabulary learning (it requires learners decide on where, how and how often to focus attention to the unknown word); sources or finding information about words (learners have to be able to get information about the words from different sources); and processes or establishing knowledge (it involves ways of remembering vocabulary and making it available for use).

Especial attention deserves guessing the meaning of unknown words (also known as lexical inferring) as one of the numerous VLS. This is because by guessing the meaning of an unknown word appealing to the context where it appears is considered the most important way that language learners can figure out the meaning when there are no other resources at their disposal such as a dictionary or
other learners and the teacher, as well as an opportunity for learners to increase their vocabulary (Marín, 2005; Nation, 2001).

Lexical inferencing, which involves making informed guesses of word meanings by means of linguistic cues and learners’ background knowledge, their awareness of the co-text and their relevant linguistic knowledge (Haastrup, 1991), was first studied by Carton (1971, in Marín, 2005). He described three types of cues –i.e. clues- which might help the learners infer the meaning: Intra-lingual, inter-lingual and extra-lingual. Intra-lingual cues include the morphological and syntactic regularity of the language, so that they are provided by the target language itself and can help identify the form of the unknown item as long as the learner has some L2 knowledge. The second ones refer to all the possible derivations that may be made on the basis of loans between languages and the occurrence of cognates. Extra-lingual cues –also known as contextual cues- include learners’ past experiences as well as world knowledge of objects and events. Unlike Carton, Sternberg and Powell (1983, in Marín, 2005), in their theory of learning words from context in L1, consider only two types of contexts. The first one is external context, which is composed of all the available cues surrounding the unknown word –for instance, the other words within the sentence in which the unknown word appears. Internal context, or co-text, on the other hand can be provided by the morphological cues with the word itself -for example, prefix, stem and suffix cues-. As it could be seen, these authors have apparently given different categorizations of cues for lexical inferencing. However, they all recognize that such cues can be obtained from a linguistic context -i.e. within the word and surrounding textual context- and from a non-linguistic one -i.e. learner’s background knowledge-.

Despite of the fact that lexical inferencing is a necessary VLS it implies a complicated process due to not always the text contains evident clues. Thus, it cannot be assumed that learners will automatically be successful at applying it (Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 2000). Furthermore, extensive research has highlighted a number of other factors that affect the likelihood of inferencing success such as the following: 1) the context must offer adequate clues to guess a specific word’s meaning; 2) readers find easier clues nearer to an unknown word rather than more
global clues; 3) learners may continue with an erroneous definition even if it does not make sense in the context; 4) the prudent use of cognates can help guessing from context; and 5) the background knowledge learners have about the topic and the culture being discussed aids inferencing (Ibid).
CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research method

The method used in the present study is qualitative inquiry within a case study. The present methodology allows researchers to gather data within a scenario where social interactions are present. Furthermore, the framework to analyze the collected data is the result of a combination of Upton (2004) list of reading strategies and Schmitt’s (1997) and Nation’s (2001) general list of vocabulary learning strategies (see section 2.6). Reading and vocabulary strategies were combined in the knowledge that reading and vocabulary keep a strong relationship among them (Grellet, 1981). Additionally, this framework was used due to its versatility at analyzing the data within a qualitative interpretation compared with other frameworks that gives interpretations from a statistical point of view –e.g. median correlations, multivariate component analysis- (Ibid).

2.1.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research can be understood as a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning, which uses special language similar to the one scientists talk about how they investigate the natural order –i.e. variables, control, and measurement- (Shank, 2002, in Ospina, 2004; Byrman, 1988, in Silverman, 2001). This type of inquiry is systematic since it follows rules agreed upon by members of the research community. Furthermore, it is empirical due to the fact that this inquiry is grounded in the world of experience. Finally, this inquiry into meaning is related to the fact that researchers –in the field of Qualitative Research- try to understand how others –the participants of a specific study- make sense of their experience –their thoughts about what happens around them-.

Qualitative research has some distinctive characteristics. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), and Silverman (2001), it combines multiple methodological practices and theories, which stress its emphasis on favoring no single methodological practice over another. It uses empirical material; it recognizes and analyses different perspectives –e.g. participants’ knowledge and varied practices and
viewpoints as a result of their different social backgrounds related to them. Furthermore, it takes into account the researchers’ reflections on their research as part of the process of knowledge production. This is the main reason why Qualitative Research is based on long descriptive narratives than on statistical tables.

The role of the Qualitative Researcher is to gain a holistic overview of the context under study. In order to pursue this aim, the researches should establish direct communication with the field and its members. By means of direct communication, the researcher attempts to capture data on the perceptions of local actors from the inside. This is why the subjectivities of the researcher and of those being studied are part of the research process (Flick, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Qualitative Research presents some advantages over Quantitative Research. According to Conger, 1998; Alvesson, 1996; Bryman et al, 1988 (in Ospina, 2004), Qualitative Research shows flexibility to follow unexpected ideas during research and explore processes effectively; it is sensible to contextual factors –e.g. the different participants’ subjective perspectives and their social backgrounds (Flick, 1998)-; and it offers opportunities to develop empirically supported new ideas and theories as a result of “researchers’ [self and shared] reflections on their research as part of the process of knowledge production”(Flick, 1998, p.4), which is fundamental in the field of language teaching (Richards, 2003).

In contrast, quantitative research aim to isolate the phenomenon under study, to reduce the level of analysis up to test hypothesis previously derived which in turns prevent the researcher to establish direct contact with the participants so that the researcher is not immersed in the setting (Ospina, 2004). These facts have led critics to claim that quantitative research ignores the difference between the natural and the social world by failing to understand the interpretations emerging from social life interactions (Ibid). Further critics to Qualitative Research are based on claims made by Quantitative Researchers in the sense of its lack of reliability and validity (Silverman, 2001). Such criticism have been addressed through the use of the term trustworthiness, which is referred to the state of a research to be credible (i.e.
truth-value) and auditable (i.e. consistent with what is searching for) (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, in Huerta, 2008).

Finally, Qualitative Research deals with qualitative information from data such as journal/diary entries, interviews, classroom recordings of interactions among you and/or your students, and observation notes (Burns, 2010). In order to analyze the data, Qualitative Research can apply one of these three approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994): Interpretivism –i.e. researchers interpret what they understand--; social anthropology in which they stay closely to the naturalistic profile and inform as exactly as the events happen; and collaborative social research where researchers and local actors may have opposing interpretations of the data.

2.1.2 Case Study

Case study is a specific methodology used for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon. It seeks a range of different kinds of evidence -which is in the case setting- that have to be abstracted and collated in such a way that is not simply a loose collection of traits (Cohen & Manion, 2000; Gillham, 2000; Bassey, 1999).

Case study investigates and reports the characteristics an individual unit shows – e.g. a child, a class, a school or a community- in real contexts, and analyses the complex dynamic and interaction of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance (Cohen & Manion, 2000).

There are several types of case study. Yin (1984, in Bassey, 1999) identifies three such types in terms of their outcomes, (a) exploratory (as a pilot to other studies or research questions); (b) descriptive (providing narrative accounts); (c) explanatory (testing theories). Stenhouse (1985) identifies four kinds of case study: (a) an ethnographic case study –single in depth study; (b) action research case study; (c) evaluative case study; and (d) educational case study. This last one is concerned with the understanding of educational actions (Cohen & Manion, 2000; Bassey, 1999)
The case study strength is that it is ideally suited to the needs and resources of the small-scale research developed by an individual researcher. Additionally, it gives the opportunity to identify and explore just one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Such aspect or problem might be the researcher’s place of work, or another institution or organization with which they have a connection: a company, a voluntary organization, or a school –e.g. studying educational innovations, evaluating programs, and informing policy (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, in López, 2012). Or it might be just one element of such an organization: a class, or a work team (Blaxter, Hughes & Tight, 2006; Bell, 1993). However, Case study has also some critics. For instance, Yin (1994) and Walker (1983) (in Bassey, 1999) argues that case study lacks rigor and has little basis for scientific generalizations, so that it can provide a distorted view of the world since it can be an uncontrolled intervention in the lives of others.

2.2 Research context

This research was carried out within a public secondary school in the outskirts of Xalapa, Ver. This secondary school offers lessons in morning and afternoon shifts. In both shifts, the 2006 SEP (the Mexican Ministry of Education) curriculum, which allots three hours per week for the English language subject, is applied. Within this curriculum, the English language is a compulsory subject in the three years of secondary education. Therefore, English is taught in three courses: English 1, 2 and 3. The research was developed with some students of a group of second grade. The purpose of the second course of English at Secondary school is that students can recognize a variety of oral and written texts (quotidien, academic and literary) and use them for academic and/or real–life purposes (SEP, 2006).

2.3 Participants’ profile

The participants of this research were three English students of a group of fifteen students of second grade in the afternoon shift. These students were a female and two male teenagers aged between thirteen and fifteen years old. All the participants had previously taken the first course of English when they were in first
grade. Additionally, they commented to the researcher that they had previously taken English lessons when they were in 5th grade of Elementary School, so it is presumably that they already have knowledge about some words in English, which may help them to understand texts written in English. This fact was one of the reasons why the researcher asked them to participate in the present study. Furthermore, these three participants showed willingness in being involved in the present research.

2.4 Research instrument

The instrument that was used in the three stages in which this research was carried out was the Think Aloud Protocol, which is one of the names that can adopt verbal reports or verbal protocols (Green, 1998) (see Appendix B for the transcription of one of the protocols). I decided to use this data collection instrument because its usefulness for eliciting the strategies used by participants when they are performing a task, as shown in Tabataba’ian’s (2011) case study about strategies used by some EFL learners studying in an upper-intermediate level at College of Ferdowsi University in Mashhad, Iran, in reading ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and GPE (General Purpose English) texts. The same instrument was used in Lau’s (2006) study, which aimed to explore the differences between good and poor Chinese readers and their use of strategies, as well as in Zárate’s (2012) study aimed at identifying the while-reading strategies some University students used to deal with a common reading difficulty, which was dealing with unknown vocabulary.

Think Aloud Protocols have been defined by Nunan (2010, p.117) as “[instruments by] which subjects complete a task or solve a problem and verbalize their thought processes as they do so.” According to Nunan (Ibid), in this instrument “the researcher collects the think aloud protocol on a tape and then analyses it on the thinking strategies involved”. Furthermore, think aloud has three goals, as Kucan and Beck (1997, in McKeown & Gentilucci, 2007:137) noted: “it provides a method of inquiry to understand cognitive processing related to reading research, it serves as a method of instruction, and it is an aspect of social interaction”.
In the field of reading research, the think aloud protocol is frequently adopted to assess students’ strategy use in a specific reading task. This is due to the fact that the think-aloud method

... provides both product data (the reading test results) and [a] process report (the think-aloud protocol) that helps us to access students’ reasoning underlining sophisticated cognitive processes. Moreover, it also allows for the analysis of affective as well as cognitive processes in reading.


This technique offers several advantages. One of the advantages is that it gives the researcher data about working memory during task execution (Chong 2003). This means that the participant “does not need to recall from long-term memory events that have taken place earlier” (Chong 2003, para.7). It also gives the researcher sequential observations of task execution over time because this technique gives account of changes that take place in the participant’s mind when the protocol is being administered —i.e. non-verbal information such as information about the spatial location of some item or piece of text (Chong 2003, Green, 1998).

The think aloud protocol also has some disadvantages. The protocol might modify the participant’s performance of a task due to the fact that participants are not usually accustomed to hearing their own voices during task performance (Chong, 2003). As a result, the verbalization of thoughts may be difficult because it implies a high cognitive load due to its form (Adapted from Branch, 1994 in Young, 2005). Therefore, this protocol does not show a relationship between the mental processing of ideas and the verbalization of thoughts (Nunan, 2010). Furthermore, it requires training the research participants for at least two sessions before the recording session in order to elicit verbalizing without interfering too much in the reading process (Ericsson & Simon, 1993; Olson et al. 1984 in Katalin, 2000: para.14-17). Finally, the varied quantity and informative value of the data makes identification of procedures for carrying out the task difficult (Nunan, 2010). Although this protocol may have its drawbacks, in other studies it has been used to great advantage and facilitated research.
2.5 Data collection process

This research was developed in three stages. The first stage began when I asked for volunteers to participate in my research project. Three students willingly agreed to participate. Then, I explained the aim of the research as well as the fact that their participation would remain anonymous. The next lesson, in order to develop the Think Aloud Protocol, I asked them to read a text chosen by myself from their textbook (see Appendix C). The text belonged to Unit Four entitled House and Home. The topic of this unit was about describing accommodation. The reason for choosing a text related to that topic was because at the moment of developing the project students were reviewing that unit. This session, after having explained and demonstrated to them how a Think Aloud Protocol works, I administered the Protocol to the three students who read the chosen text. According to the textbook authors, the reading material that it contains is graded according to students’ language level, which is Beginners or A1 from the Common European Framework (CEF).

The day of the session, which took place outside of their classroom where they usually attended all their lessons-e.g. Spanish, Sciences, English etc-, I proceeded to administer the protocol, with the help of a tape recorder. The first participant took about six minutes. While this was happening, the other participants were waiting for their turn. After the first participant finished, the second one was administered the protocol. This participant took about five minutes. The third participant took about seven minutes, as well as participant number four. With all of the participants, I was monitoring their development of the protocol by asking spontaneous questions such as Are there any queries about vocabulary?, or What do you think this word (the word that students asked me for its meaning) means in Spanish?

I decided to ask them such questions based on the knowledge that posing questions about the task for participants make evident that the interviewer – the researcher – is actively listening to the interviewee – the reader – (Kvale, 1996). In this case, I was carefully paying attention to their protocols and asking such questions. I
wanted to see if they were able to notice where they faced problems related to vocabulary. This enabled me to see if they were applying any vocabulary strategies. After this think aloud session, I proceeded with the analysis of the data I had obtained. One of the conclusions I reached was that, it did not reveal sufficient use of vocabulary strategies. Probably this fact was true because I did not teach any strategies for guessing the meaning of unknown words; in addition to the fact that the texts that the students read were probably not very difficult. For this reason I decided to implement the second stage.

The next week after having analyzed the data obtained in the first stage, I asked the same participants from the same class to continue with their collaboration. I decided to ask for the same participants based on the idea that they probably would reveal a wider use of vocabulary guessing strategies after having taught some guessing strategies. Subsequently, we arranged the second Think Aloud session in which they read a text different from their textbook, but longer than the text they read in the first stage of this research (see Appendix D). The text they read belonged to the same Unit four because, as it was explained before, students were reviewing that unit when this research was carried out.

Before the second stage was administered, I reminded to the three students how a Think Aloud Protocol works. I decided to intervene less in this protocol than in the previous one since I had realized that by asking questions I might have prevented them from using vocabulary guessing strategies. After the think aloud session had finished, I proceeded with the analysis of the data. During this analysis, I discovered that the text that the students had to read for the second stage was longer than the previous one and probably quite difficult for them because the protocols revealed a wider use of vocabulary guessing strategies.

One week after having analyzed the data obtained in the first stage, we arranged the last Think Aloud session in which they read a text chosen by me from the website http://www.englishforeveryone.org (see Appendix E). The reasons for choosing this text were that this text was longer than the text they read in the second stage of this research. Additionally, it contained specific words that they had
to guess their meaning. Furthermore, in order to guess the meaning of those words they should apply some guessing strategies I had taught two weeks before this last Protocol session since, according to the website, this text is of a low advanced language level. Finally, the text they read belonged to the same topic reviewed in unit four.

2.6 Data analysis

The framework that was used to analyze the think-aloud protocols is a combination of modified versions of the list of reading strategies for successful readers of Pressley and Afflerback (1995) as it appears in Upton (2004) with Schmitt’s (1997) and Nation’s (2001) lists of general categories of Vocabulary Learning Strategies. The original list of reading strategies deals with reading strategies used in the three stages of reading, which are: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. In the modified framework (see appendix F), pre-reading and post-reading stages were not taken into account because of the nature of the think-aloud sessions. All of the participants went straight into reading and commenting on their reading. Based on this framework, the data was analyzed by identifying which while-reading strategies were the most applied by the participants during the reading session.

Concerning the while-reading strategies, there are six while-reading strategies: combining reading styles, combining skills and strategies, using the main ideas in the text to help one’s understanding, identifying important information, making conscious inferences, and integrating different parts of the text.

- The combination of reading styles refers to reading the text from beginning to end in a straight manner. While doing so, readers can keep a steady pace or, if the text is easy, readers can increase their reading speed and decrease it when they do not understand an idea, or when they do not know the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary. Additionally, readers can skim or scan the text to look for main ideas or to identify difficult information.
When readers combine skills and strategies, they can paraphrase sections in order to remember them better or to guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary.

If readers identify important information, they look for key words, topic sentences or paragraphs, and they underline important points or examples that facilitate their understanding of the text.

Readers make conscious inferences when they infer the meaning of unknown words by means of internal or external clues. They can also use their background knowledge by relating words in the text to previous texts they have read, or they can relate the content to important themes in a specific field. Additionally, readers can create their own examples of similar concepts.

Finally, readers who integrate different parts of the text may make a visual aid such as a spider diagram or a chart with the main ideas, as well as tables or figures that the text contains for understanding what they have read. Additionally, readers may look for logical connectors, such as “on the one hand” or “in conclusion”, to clarify content and text organization.

In addition, Schmitt’s (1997) taxonomy encompasses two broaden categories within there are sub-categories and in each sub-category there are different Vocabulary Learning Strategies. The first broaden category is Strategies for the discovery of a new word’s meaning and its sub-categories are: determination and social strategies. Determination strategies involve check for L1 cognate, analyze any available pictures or gestures and guess from textual context, among others. Social strategies include, for example, ask teacher for an L1 translation and ask classmates for meaning. The second General category is Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered. The sub-categories present are Social strategies –e.g. study and practice meaning in a group--; Memory strategies –for example, use new words
in sentences--; Cognitive strategies - Flash cards--; and Metacognitive strategies --e.g.
testing oneself with word tests-. Furthermore, Nation’s (2001) taxonomy is
structured under three general categories (Planning: choosing what to focus on and
when to focus on it; Sources: finding information about words; and Processes:
establishing knowledge) which include different Vocabulary Learning Strategies,
respectively: Choosing words, Using parallels in L1 and L2, and Noticing. Finally,
Schmitt’s (1997) and Nation’s (2001) modified lists of general categories of
Vocabulary Learning Strategies dealt with strategies used for discovering a new
word’s meaning, specifically Determination Strategies, which includes checking for
L1 cognate, and guessing from textual context. The other strategy is finding
information about words, which involves analyzing the unknown word. The final
framework for analyzing the protocols is the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading strategies</th>
<th>Vocabulary Learning Strategies</th>
<th>Combination of skills and strategies</th>
<th>Making conscious inferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Paraphrase sections in order to guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary</td>
<td>Infer the meaning of unknown words by using internal or external clues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Determination Strategy: Check for L1 cognate</td>
<td>Determination Strategy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Guess from textual context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Finding information about words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Analyze the word Reader’s background knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Determination Strategies:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>* Check for L1 cognate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE: FINDINGS

The results of eight protocols revealed information about the use of while-reading strategies and vocabulary learning strategies. The while-reading strategies that were most frequent in the protocols were using a combination of skills and strategies and making conscious inferences. When the three participants made conscious inferences, there were two variations of this strategy: one of them inferred the meaning of unknown words by using internal or external clues, which involves the use of determination strategies: guessing from textual context and the finding information about words strategy: Analyze the word; while the others related information in the text to their prior knowledge by using a determination strategy: checking for L1 cognate (Upton, 2004; Nation, 2001; Schmitt, 1997). Additionally, when the participants used a combination of skills and strategies, they used background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates. Finally, the strategies used by the participants are divided in strategies used before, while and after teaching Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS).

3.1 STRATEGIES USED BEFORE TEACHING VLS

It was observed that in order to guess the meaning of the unknown word the participants paraphrased sections of the text they read while checking for L1 cognates, as well as they used their background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates.

3.1.1 Paraphrasing sections of the text while checking for L1 cognates

In the present example, it can be seen how Participant 1 (P1) tried to infer the meaning of the unknown word luxurious by paraphrasing the sentence in which this word appeared. Additionally, when he paraphrased the sentence he also checked the cognates for the words welcoming and fire.

Return from a hard day at work to relax in front of a welcoming fire in the brick fireplace, sink your feet into the luxurious carpet and feel at home.
Despite of the fact that he successfully inferred the meaning of the words welcoming and fire, he was not able to infer the correct meaning of the word luxurious. After having paraphrased the sentence, he associated the unknown word with the idea of fantastic, great. This may happen due to the fact that he was unable to check for the L1 cognate of the word. However, his guessing demonstrated that he was able to use external context for guessing the meaning (Sternberg and Powell, 1983, in Marín, 2005).

### 3.1.2 The use of background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates

In the following example it can be seen how Participant 2, after presumably having looked for the L1 cognate he could active his background knowledge in order to get a mental idea of what was the topic of the sentences. Thus, he could confirm that the topic of the sentence was giving contact details.

Open day.. from ten to eight. Call Greg Nakamura.

P2: eh, este,...*open* day , aquí es como para ir a ver la casa, de 10 a 8 pm... llama a Greg Nakamura.

This example shows how vital was for P2 having presumably looked for an L1 cognate. In this case, it may serve the resemblance with Spanish of the word *day* in order for P2 to understand that the topic of the sentences were about contact information. Additionally, it may be thought that P2 used his background knowledge about how advertisements for renting or selling a house are structured.
Both elements might have helped P2 to infer not the meaning of the unknown word *open*, but at least to understand what the topic of the sentence was.

### 3.2 STRATEGIES USED WHILE TEACHING VLS

It was observed that in order to guess the meaning of the unknown word the participants paraphrased sections of the text they read while checking for L1 cognates. They also used external clues when guessing from textual context while looking for L1 cognates.

#### 3.2.1 Paraphrasing sections of the text while checking for L1 cognates

This example shows how Participant 1 inferred the meaning of the unknown word *nomads* by looking for cognates, as well as how he checked his guessing by paraphrasing the sentence in which this word appeared.

Do you live in a house you might be  su, surprais, surpraised to learn that there are many, many kinds of hau, houses. Most people in the United States are used to houses made of wood or bricks. But many people around the world live in houses made of grass, dirt, or cloth. In the Great Rift Valley of Eritrea, the nomadic people who are in the etir tribe build their houses of straw. Their houses are shaped like domes – half spheres. The homes are small and cool. The people can move their hau, houses when they want to move. Sains the people are nomads, they move often. They take their animals to new places in order to find food.

R: ahora, bien ahí nos está marcando nomads, ¿qué será nomads?
P1: nomadas
R: Correcto, ¿está seguro que son nómadas?
P1: sí, porque... eh... dice que los nómadas eran personas que vivían en lugares... pequeños, vivían... en lugares pequeños y... y que siempre se movían

(Example 3)

In the next example it can be noticed that P1 looked for the L1 cognate in order to infer the meaning of the word *nomads*. This was possible because this word resembles to the Spanish word *nómadas*. Therefore, it can be supposed that P1 noticed this fact. Furthermore, it can be seen that P1 was really sure that the word *nomads* mean, in Spanish, *nómadas*. However, the researcher suggested him to
check if his guessing was correct. In order to do this, P1 paraphrased the sentence in which the word appeared. This suggestion was proposed in order P1 was aware of the importance contextual cues had for guessing the meaning of the word nomads (Carton, 1971, in Marín, 2005). It seemed that P1 unconsciously noticed the importance of using external context for checking unknown words inferences.

3.2.2 Using internal or external clues when guessing from textual context while looking for L1 cognates

The use of internal clues was a strategy that was really explicit only in one participant’s protocol. This example shows how Participant 1 guessed the meaning of the unknown word townhouse by using internal clues. In other words, he appealed to the structure of the word.

Fujian, Fujian, China has many townhouses that are made of hard-picked soil

R: a ver ¿qué significa soil? ¿puede entenderlo ahí?
P1: habla de – una ciudad, digo, una… si, como una ciudad en China, o un pueblo, que es Fudjian, no, Fuji, ¿no?
R:mmm
P1: si, creo que sí, es una lo, mmm… es como un a lo, ciudad en, en China. Está hablando de… townhouses, town, debemos, también podemos dividir la palabra, ¿no? Towm es ciudad, y houses son casa,
R:mmm
P1: como casas de ciudad,o , that are made of hard picked soil. Mmm… mmm...

(Example 4)

It can be seen that P1 was successful at guessing the meaning of the unknown word townhouses. This was possible because he probably looked for Intra-lingual cues that helped him in his inferencing process. It seemed that he appealed to the structure of the word, so that he mentioned that this word could be possible to divide into two meaningful parts. Probably he unconsciously saw that this was a compound word which can be divided into two meaningful sections. After having divided the word, he seemed to have looked for L1 cognates for the two parts in
which he previously divided the word. Therefore, he could figure out the meaning of the word *townhouse*.

In the following example, Participant 3 was successful at recalling the Spanish equivalent of the unknown word *nomads*. Additionally, she confirmed her guessing by paraphrasing the sentence in which the word appeared.

The homes are small and cool. The people can move their houses when they want to move, movi. Since the people are *nomads*, they movi often. They take their animals to new plis in order to find food.

R: bien, ahí *nomads*, ¿a qué se está refiriendo?  
P3: a nómadas  
R: Si, son nómadas, ¿cómo sabemos que son nómadas? Ahí, ¿Qué nos está diciendo?  
P3: ah, que... son personas que se mueven de un lugar a otro

(Example 5)

It can be seen that P3 was successful at recalling the Spanish equivalent of the word *nomads*. This could have happened due to the fact that this word is very similar to its Spanish equivalent *nómadas*. Additionally, she confirmed that her guessing was successful and correct by giving a definition of what it means *nomads*. Furthermore, she seemed to have paraphrased the sentence in which the unknown word appeared.

In the following example, Participant 2 recalled the Spanish equivalent of the word *decorated*. This was possible because he might look for Cognates in L1.

They have outdoor dining rooms which are *decorated* with tile and rock.

P2: que los... (subvocalizing: dining rooms) están decorados de rocas y...  
R: ah, correcto, entonces ¿si es correcto que decorated es decoración?  
P2: si

(Example 6)
It is probably that P2 looked at cognates in L1 in order to guess the meaning of the unknown word *decorated*. Once he looked at it, he could recall its Spanish equivalent. Furthermore, he paraphrased the sentence in which it appeared the word *decorated* so that he could confirm that his inference was correct. All this inferencing process was possible due to he may have used his background knowledge since he mentioned that *rock* is *roca* in Spanish, which seemed to have helped him in his inferencing process and gives an account of P3 ability in using Extra-lingual cues (Carton, 1971, in Marín, 2005).

3.3 STRATEGIES USED AFTER TEACHING VLS

Participants inferred the meaning of the unknown words by using external clues, as well as they applied their background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates. However, not all the unfamiliar words were possible to guess.

3.3.1 Using external clues when guessing from textual context

The following example shows how Participant 2 guessed accurately the meaning of the unknown word *tremendously*. He might appeal to contextual clues which led him in looking for L1 cognates and synonyms.

> Throughout its long history the bathtub has changed *tremendously*

R: a ver, ¿qué significa *tremendously*?
P2: algo grande, no?
R: si, pero… a ver, lea aquí
P2. La larga historia de la bañera ha sido cambiada tremendamente
R: aja, ok, entonces, la palabra *tremendously*…
P2: significativamente

(Example 7)

As it can be seen, he might have applied his background knowledge –i.e. he might know in advance the meaning of the unknown word- in attempting to infer its meaning. This is confirmed by his first guessing *algo grande*. Then, when he was asked to do another attempt, he paraphrased, in Spanish, the sentence in which the unknown word appeared. It seems that after the paraphrasing, he was aware that *tremendously* resembles in Spanish to *tremendamente*. Finally, he probably applied
again his background knowledge when offering a synonym in Spanish for the word *tremendously*. The synonym was *significativamente*. This fact evidences that P2 also looked for inter-lingual cues (Carto, 1971, in Marín, 2005).

### 3.3.2 Applying background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates

The following two examples show how Participant 1 and 2 were not able to apply their background knowledge in order to look for an L1 cognate which could help them to infer the meaning of the unknown word. For instance, Participant 1 was not able to infer by himself the meaning of the unknown word *regarding*.

..wrote a false story *regarding* the history of bathtubs.

P1: mmm... regarding esa no la entiendo
R: bueno, a ver intente leyendo de nuevo
P1: wrote a false story, que es una falsa historia...pero,
R: aja, que es una falsa historia, ¿y qué más?
P1: regarding, dice, flas, wrote a false story regarding the history of bathtubs
R: aja, ok, una falsa historia regarding the history of bathtubs, ¿de qué nos está hablando? De una falsa historia...
P1: de...
R: ya lo dijo
P1: ¿de qué?
P1: ah, de, es del tema, regarding
R: exacto
P1: pero, no sé qué significa regard-ing
R: no, pero ya lo dijo que es una falsa historia de...
P1: ah, es una falsa historia de un tema...
R: del tema de...
P1: historia
R: sí, pero de qué historia, ahí dice
P1: Regarding...
R: no, otra vez, una falsa historia Regarding, que tema sigue después de regarding
P1: del tema, de historia
R: de historia de qué...
P1: de historia
R: si, pero historia de qué
P1: of bathtubs
R: una falsa historia del tema de la historia de bathtubs, es como si fuera un conector, es una falsa historia, del tema de la historia de bathtubs
R: ¿con qué palabra del español la asociaría?
P1: mmm... me faltaría ¿sobre?
R: eso, exactamente, ahora si ya, regarding es...
P1: sobre

(Example 8)

It can be seen that P1 was not able to infer the meaning of the unknown word *regarding* since he seemed not to be aware of the fact that this word can be considered as a conjunction. Additionally, after the researcher guided him through an inferencing process, he was able to realize that such word was a conjunction which makes reference to the topic of the sentence. Therefore, he seemed not to be aware of external context (Sternberg and Powell, 1983, in Marín, 2005).

A similar situation happened with Participant 2, who could not infer by himself the meaning of the unknown word *spurious*. It was necessary that the researcher guided him through an inferencing process.

P2: *spurious*
R: Busquelo en el texto, léalo, aquí está
P2: spurious historia
R: aja, pero léalo completo
P2: historiadores... historiadores
R: qué mas...
P2: began spread Makens spurious story. Historiadores, hablan sobre la historia ....
R: Mekens spurious historia. Pero siga aquí
P2: Eight years... ocho años despues... escribió la falsa historia
R: ok, entonces, spurious...
P2: mmm....
R: a ver,léalo nuevamente, desde aquí
P2: shortly afterwards, historians began to spread Mekens spurious story. Eight years after he wrote the false story...
R: Hasta ahí... entonces, ¿qué pudo entender? , ¿qué idea le da?
P2: mmm, de la historia
R: no, recuerde ya me había dicho que Mecken había escrito una spurious historia sobre la bañera, y luego me dijo que era la falsa historia, entonces spurious significa....
P2: no es el veradero
R: exacto, enonces, aquí *spurious* significa...
**P2: falso**  
**R: correcto, la que sigue**  
(Example 9)

It can be seen that P2 required the help of the researcher in order to carry out an inferencing process. This may happen due to the word *spurious* is not commonly seen by Beginner Students. Additionally, it seemed that P2 was not aware of paying attention to contextual cues (Carton, 1971, in Marín, 2005) since it was required by the researcher to re-read the sentence again two times.
CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

This case study reported the results obtained by three second grade students of a public secondary school located in the outskirts of Xalapa during the school year 2012-2013. According to participants’ comments and my personal reflection, the most frequent language skill that students find difficult to master is reading. This is because they find words that are unknown for them. Therefore, reading a text in English is a difficult task for them. However, it can be said that, on the light of the results obtained in this research, students who apply Vocabulary Learning Strategies (VLS) adequately and purposefully may read a text written in English with ease.

The present research was developed in three stages. The first stage was carried out before I taught to them some VLS. The second one occurred a week after the first one took place. In this second stage, I taught some VLS, specifically strategies for guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary. The third one was after the week the second stage was developed. The idea of developing this research in three stages was in order to check if the participants revealed a wider use of vocabulary guessing strategies after each stage. Additionally, to know which guessing strategies they applied when they knew about the existence of such strategies. Finally, to confirm which guessing strategies they apply in order to deal with unknown vocabulary.

However it was observed that during each stage in which this research was developed, there are a number of VLS that are frequently used. These strategies are paraphrasing sections of the text while checking for L1 cognates, using internal or external clues when guessing from textual context, and the use of background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates.

Paraphrasing sections of a text while checking for L1 cognate was a strategy that participants used during the first and second stage of the research. It called my attention that participants applied this strategy before they knew that such procedure is a guessing strategy. Additionally, after I taught to them such strategy, they keep on applying it. It may be thought that they applied this strategy due to the fact they might have known such strategy in advance. A noticeable feature these two stages have in common is that when they faced an unknown word and
were asked to give its meaning, they first paraphrased the sentence in which the unknown word appeared. After they paraphrased it, they looked for an L1 cognate for the unknown word that best suits, according to the context in which that word appeared. This led me to suppose that these students were able in looking for and using external context for guessing the meaning of the unknown word (Sternberg and Powell, 1983, in Marín, 2005). This happened in the first stage of this research. On the contrary, in the second stage, students first looked for an L1 cognate in order to guess the meaning of the unknown word. After they have looked it, they paraphrased the sentence in which the unfamiliar word appeared, so that they can express the adequate meaning of it, according to the context in which it appeared. These facts make me suppose that these students could apply intra-lingual and contextual cues in order to adequately guess the meaning of the word (Caton, 1971, in Marín, 2005).

The use of internal or external clues when guessing from textual context was the second strategy used by the participants. This strategy was applied during the second and third stages of this research. The use of this strategy entails, at least three features that called my attention. The first and the second ones occurred during the second stage. The third one was seen in the third stage of the research. The first feature consisted in how Participant 1 used successfully internal clues when guessing the meaning of an unknown word. He seemed to have appealed to the word structure so that he accurately divided the word into meaningful units, which helped him to guess its meaning. This fact makes evident that looking for intra-lingual cues is a guessing strategy that may help readers in an inferencing process for knowing the meaning of an unknown word (Carton, 1971, in Marín, 2005). The second feature consisted in looking for cognates in order to understand an unknown word when it resembles like the L1 equivalent. In this case, Participant 3 recalled the Spanish equivalent of the unknown word and confirmed that her guessing was successful and correct by giving a definition in Spanish of it. The third feature was evident when Participants 1 and 2 followed the same procedure in guessing the meaning of the unknown word. First, they look for cognates in L1. Once they have found it, they paraphrased the sentence in which the unknown
word appeared. Finally, once they have paraphrased the sentence, they applied their background knowledge to offer a synonym for the unknown word, so that its meaning was adequate according to the context in which the unknown word appeared. Such facts make evident that the three participants looked for intra- and extra-lingual cues for guessing the meaning of the unknown word (Carton, 1971, in Marín, 2005).

The use of background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates was a strategy that the three participants were not able to use successfully. This strategy was applied during the first and the third stages of the research. During the first stage, participants 1 and 2 tried to look for cognates in L1 in the sentence that contained the unknown word. They were successful in finding it, but they could not use such cognate in the inferencing process for getting the meaning of an unknown word. A similar situation happened in the third stage. The main problem that emerged during the development of this stage was both participants required the assistance of the researcher during the inferencing process. Probably, they were not able to guess the meaning of the unknown words by themselves due to the fact that they seemed not to be aware of how to look for intra-lingual cues and external context (Carton, 1971; Sternberg and Powell, 1983, both in Marín, 2005). These results can lead to interpret that due to L2 –i.e. foreign language- learners’ restricted vocabulary knowledge their ability to make use of the remaining context as a contextual clue for guessing the meaning of unknown words when reading a text written in English is limited (Folse, 2004).

Finally, it can be said vocabulary guessing can be applied as an alternative strategy to reading comprehension. It should be remembered that for L2 learners, according to how they read a text and the subject-matter of it, it is probably some problems emerge such as being unaware of the meaning of some crucial words. This may have happen as a result of some language items that are difficult for readers to understand. Therefore, if L2 learners do not develop some of the qualities of good readers (Díaz-Barriga & Hernández, 2002), they may face serious difficulties when they study a higher academic degree (Luna, 2003). For these reasons, students must develop reading and vocabulary learning strategies. More specifically, learners
should develop some vocabulary guessing strategies. In the particular case of secondary school students, it is advisable that they know how to paraphrase sections of a text while checking for L1 cognates, as well as that they should know how to use internal or external clues when guessing from textual context. These two strategies demonstrated to be really helpful when learners know how to apply it, as it was presented previously. Therefore, the proposal (See appendix G) shows how the English teacher can help L2 learners in developing some vocabulary guessing strategies.
CONCLUSIONS

This small-scale qualitative research was based on think-aloud protocols aimed at identifying vocabulary learning strategies, specifically, the vocabulary guessing strategies three students of a group of second grade students of a public secondary school located in the outskirts of Xalapa applied when inferring the meaning of unknown words. During the inquiry, they were required to read a passage and voice the strategies they used to deal with unknown vocabulary.

One of the issues that emerged in this research was of the think aloud protocols. It was expected that they showed different results as they were carried out in three stages. The first stage consisted in asking students to guess the meaning of unknown words by themselves, without telling them how to do it. The second stage required that students guessed the meaning of unknown words by applying some vocabulary guessing strategies. The third one asked students to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words by applying the vocabulary guessing strategies seen in class, as well as the ones they applied in the first stage. What could be found after administering the protocols was that in the three stages the common vocabulary guessing strategies readers applied for dealing with unfamiliar words were paraphrasing sections of the text while checking for L1 cognates, using internal or external clues when guessing from textual context, and the use of background knowledge in order to look for L1 cognates.

Another issue that may call the attention is the occurrence of the strategies. For instance, the paraphrased sections of a text while checking for L1 cognates occurred in the first and in the second stages. The only variation that was noticeable was that during the first stage they first paraphrased the sentence in which the unknown word appeared. After they paraphrased it, they looked for an L1 c cognate that bests suits for the unknown word, according to the context in which that word appeared. This fact may lead to suppose that participants knew in advance this strategy. Whereas in the second stage students first looked for an L1 cognate in order to guess the meaning of the unknown word. After they have looked it, they
paraphrased the sentence in which the unfamiliar word appeared, so that they can express the adequate meaning of it, according to the context in which it appeared.

A suggestion that can be made on the basis of the data analyzed in the present research is that more attention should be paid to teach students how to develop their reading skills and train them in the use of vocabulary guessing strategies for inferring the meaning of unknown words. However, it should be paid attention to the fact that foreign language learners’ lack of vocabulary will limit their abilities to make use of context as extra-lingual cues for guessing the meaning of unknown words (Carton, 1971; Folse, 2004). Therefore, an interesting area for future studies would be to research about what other types of vocabulary learning strategies students use when reading academic texts and how much and why they use them.

In conclusion, I would like to say that this research helped me to understand the inferencing process, the problems that readers may face when they could not guess the meaning of the unknown word and the way of solving them through the use of vocabulary guessing strategies. Additionally, this research showed me the importance of strategy use to overcome reading difficulties. Finally, this study did not only show me my limitations as an EFL teacher-researcher, but encouraged me to continue doing research in the field of vocabulary and its relationship with reading.
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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Vocabulary Learning strategies Schmitt’s Taxonomy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for the discovery of a new word’s meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Determination Strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze part of speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze affixes and roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Check for L1 cognate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze any available pictures or gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guess from textual context</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilingual dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monolingual dictionary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flash Cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ask teacher for an L1 translation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teacher for paraphrase or synonym of new word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask teacher for sentence including the new word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask classmates for meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover new meaning through group work activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies for consolidating a word once it has been encountered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study and practice meaning in a group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher checks students’ flashcards or word lists for accuracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with native-speakers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Memory strategies</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study words with a pictorial representation of its meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image word’s meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect word to a personal experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate the word with its coordinates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect the word to its synonyms and antonyms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use semantic maps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use ‘scales’ for gradable adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peg Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loci Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group words together to study them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group words together spatially on a page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use new words in sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group words together within a storyline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study the spelling of a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study the sound of a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say new word aloud when studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image word form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underline initial letter of the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Configuration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use Keyword Method</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affixes and roots (remembering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part of speech (remembering)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraphrase the word’s meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use cognates in study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learn the words of an idiom together</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use physical action when learning a word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use semantic figures grids</td>
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<tr>
<td>Verbal repetition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flash cards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take notes in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use the vocabulary section in your textbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to tape of word lists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Put English labels on physical objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep a vocabulary notebook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Vocabulary Learning strategies Nation’s Taxonomy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General class of strategies</th>
<th>Types of strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning: choosing what to focus on and when to focus on it</strong></td>
<td>Choosing words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing the aspects of word knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Choosing strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Planning repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sources: finding information about words</strong></td>
<td>Analyzing the word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consulting a reference source in L1 or L&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using parallels in L1 and L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processes: establishing knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Noticing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retrieving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Generating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Think-aloud protocol example

P1. Bueno, el texto dice que, es, habla sobre una casa, ah... y dice la, tu casa de los sueños, la casa de tus sueños es re, es ahora realidad... come and experience it... que es una, yo supongo que dice ... Una experiencia... aunque no me acuerdo... come... mmm. A lo mejor es una experiencia muy, muy buena o, no sé. Bueno... es una oportunidad muy grande... que no se volverá a... this is a opportunity not to miss... eh... yo supongo que es otra de las, es una de los cuartos de la casa que,, y que es una, supongo una gran oportunidad para comprarla.

Luego dice, tiene, just, eh, forty, no, ... bueno, habla de que tiene ...mmm... un patio de 300 metros, creo, muy grande, y... que es un, es un buen lugar para relajarse después de trabajar, de tanto trabajo. Ehh... y está enfrente de, no, (long pause), ah, dice return from a hard day at work to relax in front of a welcoming fire in the brick fireplace, sink your feet into the luxurious carpet and feel at home. Yo supongo que debe de decir que, que es un lugar para relajarse y que está ... mmm. In front, es enfrente de, infront of wellcoming, es welcome es de bienvenidos y, pues, mmm, una... pues, como que es una... también dice wellcoming fire... Fire no es fuego?... y que te dan una bienvenida calurosa, puede ser, ah... y que luxories, luxurious, que es... que es genial, que es grandioso, que... que, bueno que está muy buena para relajarse, y que, y que te reciben con un..., te dan una, una recepción calurosa, cuando te reciben...

Ah, dice what you will fin, what you will find in your new home, que qué, cuál es tu ... mmm... home, es que what es qué y you es tú, que, como cuál es tu casa... nueva para ti o algo así, no?... ehh.. tiene two spacious bedroom, que tiene dos espaciosas recámaras, para descansar, the most moder bathroom, y el más moderno baño, a fully-equipped kitchen with a traditional ceramic sink, que tiene una cocina muy equipada y una vajilla tradicional de cerámica, no, si? si, y a comfortable living room an a small but atractive yard, que tiene un jardín muy atractivo, muy bonito y que tiene un una sala... este, una, una confortable sala.
Appendix C

The text participants Read in the first stage of the research

Appendix D

The text participants read in the second stage of the research

“Houses Around the World”
Reading Comprehension – Informational Passages

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

Do you live in a house? You might be surprised to learn that there are many, many kinds of houses. Most people in the United States are used to houses made of wood or bricks. But many people around the world live in houses made of grass, dirt, or cloth.

In the Great Rift Valley of Eritrea, the nomadic people who are in the Atr tribe build their houses of straw. Their houses are shaped like domes – half spheres. The homes are small and cool. The people can move their houses when they want to move. Since the people are nomads, they move often. They take their animals to new places in order to find food.

People who belong to the Uros tribe of Lake Titicaca, Peru build their houses of reeds. Not only that — they also live on islands that are made of reeds! Their boats are made of reeds too! About 2,000 people live on these man-made islands. They started to build their own islands about 500 years ago.

In Andalusia, in the south of Spain, some people live in underground houses. This kind of house is called a cueva. During the winter, the houses stay warm. During the summer, the houses stay cool.

In Sana’a, Yemen, some people live in tall houses made of bricks. These bricks are made of clay, straw, and soil. The bricks last many years — maybe as long as 500 years. The modern houses in Sana’a are made to look like the older, traditional houses, but they are made of concrete instead of bricks.

In Mindanao in the Philippines, some people still live in tree houses. The tree houses are made of bamboo with grass roofs. The houses are good lookouts for snakes and wild animals. The air is cool and the houses stay dry. Now, most people use these tree houses as meeting places.

The fishermen of Sabah, Malaysia build their houses on the water. They use wood from mangrove trees. This wood stays strong in the water. The houses receive official addresses from the government.

Fujian, China has many townhouses that are made of hard-packed soil. The dirt becomes as strong as brick when it is packed hard. One large family group lives in a townhouse. The townhouses were built around 300 years ago. A group of townhouses is protected by a thick dirt-packed wall.

In the Gobi Desert in Mongolia, some nomadic people live in homes called getas. These homes are made of cloth. The cloth is filled with animal hair. Two poles in the center of the house hold the house up. The people move often to find food for their animals. The houses are easy to move and set up.

Some American Indians live in teepees. These homes are made of cloth or buffalo hide. There are wooden poles used to hold the teepee up. Now some people use teepees only for special ceremonies, but people used to live in them all the time.

The traditional houses of Chitos, Greece, are made of stone. They have arched doorways and indoor courtyards. They have outdoor dining rooms which are decorated with tile and rock. This means they are ornamented, and made to look more beautiful.

The Dayak people of Indonesia build some of their houses on stilts, several feet above the ground. The frame of the house is made of iron. The walls are made of tree bark. The floors are made of wooden planks which are placed side by side. The houses are decorated with pictures of water snakes and rhinoceros birds. These animals are part of the people’s story of creation, or how the world was made.

People build their houses to fit the needs of their lives. The houses are different, but one thing is the same wherever you go. There’s no place like home!
Appendix E

The text participants read in the third stage of the research

“Bathtubs”
Reading Comprehension — Informational Passages

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

Bathtubs have a very curious history. The bathtub has been in existence for thousands of years. Given its long history, the modern day bathtub is very different from its predecessors. The bathtub originated in ancient Rome as a social gathering place. It did not become the private bathtub, common in American households, until the early 20th century. From its early beginnings in Rome, to cast iron horse troughs, and eventually to the modern day bathtub, it is clear that the bathtub has had quite an evolution.

The Romans are famous for being one of the first civilizations to bathe. Starting in around 500 BC, Roman citizens were encouraged to bathe daily in one of the many public bathhouses. The Romans used the public baths as a place for social events and as a chance to get to know other people. Their public baths were fairly large and most commonly made of marble. The Romans used lead or bronze pipes to fill the tub with water. Contrary to popular belief, the habit of bathing continued after the collapse of the Roman Empire, and was common throughout the Middle Ages. Bathing eventually went out of fashion at the beginning of the Renaissance period, only to resurface in the 19th century.

In 1883, the Standard Sanitary Manufacturing Company and the Kohler Company began producing cast-iron tubs. These companies advertised their tubs as horse troughs — large tubs where horses could drink — because this was seen as a more marketable product than a bathtub. However, human bathing in the tubs became popular due to the easy to clean surface of the tub, and the desire to prevent disease.

One cannot explain the history of bathtubs without mentioning the name Henry L. Mencken. He was a journalist who infamously wrote a false story regarding the history of bathtubs. In his story, Mencken wrote that the first bathtub in the United States belonged to Adam Thompson. According to the story, Adam Thompson put a bathtub in his house in 1842. At a Christmas party, four guests tried the tub, and news of the bathtub was in the newspaper the next day. Mencken went on to claim that some people were upset about the news of Thompson’s bathtub because they believed it to be undemocratic. In addition to these, he fabricated several other details. He wrote that the bathtub was dangerous, and that the Philadelphia Common Council considered disallowing bathing between November 1 and March 15 of that year for health reasons. He even wrote that several cities put very high taxes on water for houses that had bathtubs.

Mencken claimed that he did not expect people to believe his newspaper story. However, his story was reprinted in many newspapers. Shortly afterward, historians also began to spread Mencken’s spurious story. Eight years after he wrote the false story, Mencken wrote a second story admitting that everything he had written about bathtubs was false. His story on the bathtub is now considered to be one of the most famous newspaper hoaxes, or tricks, in history. Even today, some of Mencken’s false information still gets intermixed with the true history of bathtubs.

Finally, after World War I and after Mencken’s hoax — many new houses were built in the United States with indoor plumbing. Previously, most houses in the United States did not have indoor plumbing. In the early 1920s, only 21% of houses had bathrooms, but by the end of the twentieth century, all new houses had bathrooms.

Today, there are many different types of bathtubs. Luxury bathtubs are made not only for bathing but also for recreation and relaxation. Some homes have hot-tubs, which are also called spas. The hot tub has a built in heater that keeps the water hot and jets to create bubbles. Some hot tubs even have built-in sound systems so the bather can listen to music while they relax. There are also tubs made just for the elderly and disabled. These bathtubs allow people to walk into the tub without having to step over the edge.

It is apparent that, throughout its long history, the bathtub has changed tremendously since its birth in ancient Rome.
Appendix F

Framework of While-Reading Strategies for Successful Readers


While Reading
Use a combination of reading styles
1. Read the text straight through, from beginning to end
   A. Keep a steady pace OR
   B. If the text is easy, increase your reading speed UNTIL something goes wrong (For example, you miss or do not understand important meanings)
2. Skim the text from beginning to end at a faster pace than number 1 above
   A. Read only for main ideas
   B. Read more slowly for important/difficult information
3. Scan the text, reading only selected sections based on your prior knowledge and prereading decisions

Use a combination of skills and strategies
1. Read aloud
2. Look for patterns that the author uses to help you understand (ways of defining, lists of examples, idea/paragraph development, etc.)
3. Repeat/restate difficult ideas immediately after reading them
   A. To remember the ideas better
   B. To complete your understanding of the ideas

4. Paraphrase sections
   a. To understand the overall structure
   b. To use related words, concepts, or ideas in your own sentences

5. Pause to think about the text

Use the text and main ideas to help your understanding
1. As you begin to read
   A. Ask, “What is the overall paragraph/text meaning?”
   B. Ask, “Do I understand the paragraph/text’s structure?”
   C. Based on your answers, predict how the content and structure will develop

2. Adjust your answers as you read more of the text
   A. Are previous answers still accurate based on new information?
   B. What specific new information supports or does not support your answers?
   C. Do structural clues support the adjusted answers?
      (For example, is the author’s summary or conclusion consistent with your new understanding of the text?)

3. What is your final understanding of the text based on content and structure?
   (Remember to include information you did not expect to find)

Identify Important Information
1. Use terms you already know in a text to build your understanding of important new ideas
2. Look for and learn the key words of a text
3. Look for topic sentences
4. Look for topic paragraphs
5. Copy key sentences
6. Highlight, underline, circle, make notes, or outline important points, including important examples
7. Note references in the text that should be looked at or considered later
Make Conscious Inferences

1. Know the referent of a pronoun
2. Infer the meanings of new words by using internal (root words, prefixes, etc.) and external (neighboring words, main idea, etc.) clues
3. Infer global meanings of a text’s words and sentences, not just their literal meanings
4. Relate information in the text to your prior knowledge
   A. Explain the text using your prior knowledge
   B. Create your own examples of concepts in the text
   C. Broaden specific ideas in the text based on your prior knowledge
   D. Relate events, objects, setting, words, phrases, etc. in the new text to previous texts you have read
   E. Relate this text’s content to important themes in a field/profession
   F. Relate this text’s content to personally important prior knowledge
      (For example, your own theories, writings, experiences)
5. Make inferences about the author
   A. What are this author’s assumptions, worldviews, beliefs, motives?
   B. What is her/his personal background? Professional reputation?
   C. What are her/his strategies in constructing the text?
   D. What is this author’s expertise in this content area?

Integrate Different Parts of the Text

1. Try to understand the “big picture” of the text’s meaning before you try to understand how the details are organized
2. Recognize the main idea of the text and the components that support it
   A. Do the main points work together to support the overall meaning?
   B. Is there cohesion from one sentence/paragraph/section to the next?
   C. Does each sentence/paragraph/section develop logically?

3. Use your knowledge of texts
   A. Note the text’s overall structure (cause/effect, compare/contrast, etc.)
   B. Note the different parts of the text (introduction, examples, transitions, etc.) and how they interrelate (Is this still part of the introduction, or is this the first topic? This sounds like a summary—is it the conclusion?)
   C. Use the methods of text development to help your comprehension across paragraphs (This paragraph is listing similarities. Will the next paragraph list the differences?)
   D. Note paragraph elements that support a difficult paragraph (Examples, categories, extended definitions, etc.)
   E. Use logical connectors to clarify content and text organization (“First of all,” “On the other hand,” “In conclusion”)
4. Use other parts of the text to help you understand difficult passages
   A. Use tables, figures, footnotes
   B. Jump forward to look for information that will help your understanding of what you have already read
   C. Jump backward to review/understand information that is important to the remaining text
   D. Go back and forth in the text to notice similarities, differences, and logical progressions between the various sections
5. Make a visual aid to help you recognize integrations
   A. Create an outline
   B. Draw a diagram
Appendix G

Handout for the pedagogical proposal


Read the text and answer the questions

**SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Living in a house with three bedrooms and a nice backyard used to be many people’s dreams. This is no longer the case. Most people now prefer living in apartments.

They are more convenient than houses because they’re easier to run and they’re safer, especially when they have 24-hour security. When apartment owners leave for the day, they can lock the front door and know that everything will be in perfect order when they return.

Another modern trend, which is becoming more and more popular, is living in a mobile home. Mobile homes are much smaller than houses or apartments, but they have everything you need, and they are cheaper to buy and to run. Many mobile homes even have a fully equipped kitchen with a double sink and a dishwasher. Of course, there is the added advantage that you can go and live in a different city and take your home with you!

With cities getting larger and larger, the tendency should be to recognize that small is beautiful.

1. What does Apartments are easy to run mean? (line 5-6)
   a) Physical activity of moving fast
   b) To operate or manage something
   c) To organize an activity

2. lock (line 8) means:
   a) To fasten something with a key, so that other people cannot open it
   b) Impossible to move
   c) To close a door

3. order (line 9) refers to:
   a) The purpose of doing something
   b) The state of being organized
   c) An order/command

4. What does Mobile homes are cheaper to buy and to run mean? (line 13)
   a) To start its engine
   b) Physical activity of moving fast
   c) To operate or manage something

5. The word sink in line 15 means:
   a) To become submerged in water
   b) The place in the kitchen where you wash your dishes
   c) A place in a very bad condition and seems unlikely to improve
SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL IN THE 21st CENTURY*

Strategy: The use of internal or external clues when guessing from textual context

Objective: To guide students in their attempts to using textual context for guessing the meaning of unknown words.

Material: Photocopied Handouts with the text Small is Beautiful in the 21st Century,

Procedure:

1. Ask students to scan the text in order they get a general idea of the topic. Then, encourage students to comment their ideas about the text.

2. Ask the students to take turns for reading aloud each sentence of the text. When a paragraph is finished, ask for volunteers to explain what they understood about the paragraph is about.

3. Encourage the whole group to discuss about if they understood the same or if they have different ideas.

4. Ask your students to guess the meaning of an unknown word that appear in the read paragraph. If nobody is able to guess its meaning, follow this sequence of steps.

   a. Encourage students to paraphrase the ideas they understood before and after the unknown word.

   b. Then, asks students to look for a cognate in L1 so that students can figure out better the idea of the sentence in which the unknown word appear.

   c. After that, ask students to look for internal clues –e.g. morphemes, suffixes, prefixes etc- so that they can have a clearer idea about the topic of the sentence so that they can guess the meaning of the unknown word.
d. Ask your students to guess the meaning of an unknown word that appear in the read paragraph. If nobody is able to guess its meaning, asks them to paraphrase the paragraph in which the unknown word appear.

5. Repeat the sequence of steps until all the unknown words are guessed.

6. Asks students to answer the comprehension questions so that they can confirm if they have correctly inferred the meaning of the unknown word.