THE IMPACT OF THE THINK-ALOUD STRATEGY IN THE ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION OF EFL 10\textsuperscript{TH} GRADERS

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Trabajo de grado presentado como requisito parcial para obtener el título de Licenciado en la Enseñanza de la Lengua Inglesa

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RESUMEN

Esta investigación tuvo como fin reportar el impacto generado por la estrategia de pensar en voz alta en la comprensión lectora de 12 estudiantes de grados 10 de un colegio público de la ciudad de Pereira. Así mismo, se reportarán las percepciones de los estudiantes con respecto a la estrategia de pensar en voz alta. Los métodos usados para llevar a cabo la recolección de datos para esta investigación han sido: diarios, grabaciones de audio, entrevistas y un test.

Los resultados obtenidos al final de esta investigación fueron positivos en términos de comprensión lectora en inglés, ya que después de implementar la estrategia de pensar en voz alta los estudiantes lograron una mejor comprensión de los textos leídos en clase.

De igual manera, los estudiantes que hicieron parte de este proceso reportaron haber obtenido cambios favorables en aspectos del idioma inglés tales como: el vocabulario, la pronunciación y la escucha.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to report the impact generated by the think aloud strategy in the English reading comprehension of 12 EFL tenth graders who belong to a state high school in Pereira. In the same way, the perceptions of these students in regards to the think aloud strategy are reported. The methods used to collect all the data in this investigation were: journals, audio recordings, interviews, and a test.

The results obtained at the end of this study were positive in terms of English reading comprehension, since after implementing the think-aloud strategy, these tenth grade students achieved a better comprehension of the texts used in the English classes.

Likewise, the students who took part of this process reported to have positive changes in English aspects such as: vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening.
Dedication

To the Ruiz Montes family

To my dad, who has been and will be with me forever.

I love you.
Acknowledgement

Larry Ruiz Montes acknowledges the collaboration of all the people who supported him along this investigation process. I would like to start thanking the Ruiz Montes family, and specially my parents Ilian Ruiz Carmona and Maria Luz Mila Montes Ortiz, without them this important achievement could have not been possible. I would also like to thank my thesis partner as well as his mother, Nelly Cardenas, who fed me all this time with delicious meals.

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(Alexander Moreno Cárdenas)

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Introduction

Think aloud for reading comprehension

In this research project the reader will find aspects related to the think-aloud strategy in regards to reading comprehension. The content of this investigation is conformed by four chapters which are explained briefly next.

In chapter one, the statement of the problem and rationale of this inquiry are included, in order to explain the reading difficulties that tenth grades are facing currently in Pereira´s state high schools. Likewise, it mentions how the think-aloud strategy is considered as possible solution to solve such reading problem in these graders. At the end of this chapter, it establishes the questions and the objectives of this research project.

In chapter two, the reader will find the theoretical framework of our investigation that will support our thoughts about reading comprehension and reading strategies issues. Afterwards, the literature review in which studies related to reading comprehension and think-alouds from other researchers is stated as well. Hence, this chapter is very important because it will give academic support when the discussion section is developed.

In chapter three, the reader will find which the type of study of this investigation is, as well as the methods used to collect the data from the think-aloud sessions developed in the classroom. It is also mentioned issues related to the participants and the context in which this investigation took place. Additionally, the reader will be given an idea of how these reading sessions were carried out with the tenth students and how the data collected was analyzed.
Finally, chapter four will illustrate all the findings resulted from this research process as well as the theory that supports all the data obtained throughout this study. This chapter also portrays all the things that the researchers learnt from this investigation, and other aspects that should be taken into account for further research.
CHAPTER 1

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RATIONALE

Nowadays, reading has become very important for learners of English as a second or as a foreign language. Reading may help students not only to develop reading but also speaking, writing and listening skills. For instance, conversational performances (e.g. dialogues and debates); writing tasks; and listening activities (if the reading is aloud) can arise from a text (Cardona, 1999). When people read, their level of thinking increases; in other words, the more people read the more they learn. Once known the importance of reading in learning a language, motivated the present investigation focused on reading comprehension.

Below three reasons are listed to explain why to develop an investigation based on reading comprehension. The first reason will talk about reading as problematic issue in Colombian students and the importance of reading in school. The other two reasons which are considered as the most important ones, will give a strong rationale about why to conduct this research based on reading comprehension in English language.

The first reason is based on an international perspective in which it is believed that Colombian students, in their mother tongue, do not understand what they read as a consequence, the ideas they argue in regards to a text are not strong and intelligible (PIRLS, 2006). Probably, difficulties in regards to reading with among students occur because Colombians tend to not read at home. In fact, in Colombia the average of books per home is low and the results obtained at schools reflect this problem (PIRLS, 2006). It is clearly shown how the absence of reading habits in students may influence negatively school success. Moreover, when many children do not learn to read, the public schools can not and will not be regarded as successful (American Federation of
Therefore, if all teachers not only teach but also encourage students to read, students will have more chances to become successful academically.

The second reason has to do with what was reported by Instituto Colombiano Para el Fomento de la Educacion Superior (ICFES) (2006) that most of the students who were evaluated in 2006 scored at a low-middle level in English. The ICFES test is divided in two parts, the first one denominated common nucleus which is conformed by 24 questions and makes emphasis on different reading comprehension levels and the second one which is focused mainly on 15 questions that establishes reading levels with intertextual and relational characteristics. As it is shown, in the ICFES test the majority of the questions in English, are aimed at reading comprehension. If students do not comprehend what they read in English, consequently, they will get low results in the English part of the text. For this reason it is very important that Colombian students develop the ability to comprehend different types of reading in English with a good pace and comprehension (Cardona, 1999). Furthermore, it is very relevant to look for solutions to this concern of reading in students since Colombia is developing a bilingual program in its education in which for tenth and eleventh grades, students are supposed to have not only a critical posture when they are approaching a text, but also a very well understanding of the gist of what they are reading. That is why this study is important because we are exploring ways to address these comprehension issues.

Finally, the third reason emerged from middle-low results obtained in a diagnostic test (see annex 1) developed with three tenth grades of our pre-service teaching, which consisted on answering six questions from a short story. These results helped us to corroborate that students possess reading comprehension problems that we had identified during a reading activity developed at the beginning of our pre-service teaching.
For all the reasons mentioned above, we carried out this research project focused on exploring tenth-grade students’ reading comprehension issues implementing the think-aloud strategy. The main reason to implement think-alouds with tenth-grade students is because the think-aloud strategy helps readers to think about how they make meaning out of text. Moreover, it is an important reading strategy because think-aloud makes students think while they read for constructing meaning in an easier way from the text (Beers, 2003). Additionally, thinking aloud helps students to learn, think, and reflect upon the reading process. That is, students not only make sense about what they read but also move beyond literal decoding to comprehending (Wilhelm, 2001). Our motivation to conduct this study was to find a reading strategy that may foster students’ reading comprehension. We based our choice for applying thinking aloud in our study because it helps students to make sense of what they read, and leads students to construct meaning out of texts. Through the use of think aloud, students may be more able to comprehend what they read. As a transactional strategy, think aloud is a joint process of teachers and students working together to construct understandings of text as they interact with it (Pressley et al., cited by McKeon and Gentilucci, 2007).

In short, the purpose of our study is to implement, examine, and report the impact of the implementation of the think aloud strategy in the English reading comprehension of public school tenth grade students.
RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the impact of the think-aloud strategy in the English reading comprehension of tenth grade students in a context of English as a Foreign Language?

RELATED- QUESTION

What are students’ responses after using the think-aloud strategy?

OBJECTIVES

GENERAL:

➢ To report the impact in reading comprehension of tenth graders by the use of the think aloud reading strategy.

SPECIFIC:

➢ To identify which are the influences of the think aloud strategy on students reading comprehension of tenth graders of English as a foreign language context.
➢ To report students’ reflections in terms of the application of the think aloud strategy.
CHAPTER 2

RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

In this section, we will mention relevant definitions to our study such as: literacy, reading and reading strategies among others.

What is Literacy?

Literacy may be defined as the ability of any person to write and read any text, but nowadays this concept has another relevant function in people’s daily situations. Literacy goes beyond reading and writing; it involves communication and culture and can be expressed through many forms of communication means in twenty one century. Therefore, people who use literacy have more advantages than those who are out of the trend of current means of communication such as internet, TV and newspaper (UNESCO, 2003). In other words, literacy may help people to have a different perspective about the world in which they currently live. It is relevant to highlight how more people around the world are learning English as second or as foreign language (Grabe, 1991). In regards to what Grabe stipulated, Ediger (2001), comments that “due to most of the countries around the world are adopting the English language as a required subject in younger students, the focus on literacy has increased considerably” (p.153). For all of these reasons, literacy should be taken as a main part of a foreign language learning process.

As it is already known, this research project deals with the implementation of reading strategies to accomplish reading comprehension, subsequently, it is important to start defining what reading is.
What is Reading?

As this investigation has to do with interaction, the following definitions about reading are aimed to reading as a form of interaction. In that sense, Aebersold & Field (1997) cited Rumelhart’s definition about reading to state that “Reading involves the reader, the text and the interaction between reader and the text”. (p. 5). Additionally, there is another author like Bernhardt cited by Ediger (2001) who refers to reading as “an important tool of interaction which involves a text, a reader, and a social context” (p. 154). These definitions fit our investigation well enough because in our study we are in a constant interaction with students and students with the text, in order to build understanding.

Another element considered for reading is how the reader has to interpret the text, using the prior knowledge that he may have at that moment (Hudelson, cited by Ediger 2001). That is to say that, at the moment of reading any text, the reader’s objective is to understand what he reads, bearing in mind mainly his prior knowledge to interpret the key ideas of the text and the context in which the reading is taking place.

Finally, Nuttall cited by Aebersold and Field (1997) argues that “reading is like an infectious disease: it is caught not taught. (And you can’t catch it from someone who hasn’t got it)” (p.192). This statement already mentioned above by Nuttall, is relevant to our study since in this investigation what we are doing is modelling students how to use reading strategies for comprehending reading texts.

The Process of Reading in a Foreign Language

There are several authors who comment about the process of reading in a foreign language. Goodman cited by Cardona (1999) points out that “the reading process is universal since the general purpose in all languages is to get meaning from the text”
Accordingly, the only thing which matters is to know how to read, and once the person acquired that skill in the mother tongue, this person is able to use it in other languages as well.

Another main assumption about the process of reading in a foreign language is that there are several factors such as oral knowledge, the script of the native language, literacy level in the native language and the students’ incentive that affect students’ ability to read in a foreign language (Bouchard; Douroudous; & Motta, 1979). Notwithstanding, authors like Alliende & Condemarin, Carbonell, & Smith cited by Cardona (1999) agree that “for reading in a foreign language, the reader does not require to have a perfect linguistic competence, whenever if the texts are not complicated in terms of linguistic structure and if they are accessible for the readers’ cognitive capacity” (p. 35). It means that readers can deal with foreign readings if these texts are easy to understand. That is why in this study it was decided to use short stories because they are simple as well as accessible for the tenth students’ proficiency level.

In order to remark the difference between the reading process in first language and second language, other authors state that the difference between L1 and L2 readers is that L2 readers generally have weaker linguistic skills and a more limited vocabulary than do L1 readers. L2 students may also have some difficulties recognizing the ways in which texts are organized and how the information is presented, leading to possible comprehension problems (Grabe and Stoller, 2001). That is why, it is very important to know how a foreign reader deals with the comprehension process of any text in that target language.
What is Reading Comprehension?

A neurological definition states that the ability to provide accurate responses regarding questions concerning written language is defined as reading comprehension (Community Transitions, 1988). Nevertheless, Kintsch & Kintsch and Pressley & Block cited by Brigham, et. al (2007) argue that “reading comprehension is not only concerning with written language but is a process of involving the integration of decoding ability, vocabulary knowledge, prior knowledge of the topic considered, and relevant strategies to make sense of a text and understand it” (p.1). As reading comprehension is more than understanding the written language, understanding text involves a series of strategies that the reader should use in order to make sense of the text. Gillam, Fargo & Robertson (2009), cite several authors to illustrate that “comprehension is a complex set of processes that involves the encoding of facts, the activation of knowledge, and the generation of inferences to connect information in ways that make it understandable and memorable” (p.1). Thus, reading comprehension is a matter of providing accurate responses but taking into account vocabulary and prior knowledge with the purpose of giving meaning to texts.

There is another definition of reading comprehension stated by Snow (2002), which says that “reading comprehension is a process extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 11). According to this definition, we believe that through interactive activities is much easier to comprehend the readings. In order to comprehend a text Carrell; Carson et al. & Shih are cited by Aebersold and Field (1997) to stipulate that “becoming more aware of what readers do when they read, becoming more conscious of their own reading processes, is a powerful tool for improving reading efficiency”(p. 95). Therefore, in order to
comprehend a text and to become a proficient reader, an awareness of the process of reading itself is necessary.

**Reading Comprehension Strategies**

Song (1998) cites Block to state that “reading strategies indicate how readers conceive a task, what textual cues they attend to, how they make sense to what they read, and what they do when they do not understand” (p. 1). Hence, before implementing any reading strategy, teachers should be aware of knowing first the term metacognition, which is merely to understand how (not just what) the process of knowing and perceiving is given in readers (Aebersold and Field, 1997). Once known what this term implies, it is also very important to be familiarized with the concept of metacognitive awareness which is the process that enables learners to assess their level of comprehension and adjust their strategies for greater success (Baker & Brown, 1984). Therefore, the implementation of reading strategies should be linked to a metacognitive process because students should be able to use the reading strategies when necessary.

**Think Aloud**

In this research, it was decided to implement the think-aloud strategy because it was used as an instructional approach, and also because this strategy helped readers to comprehend more easily what was being read by them. Afflerbach and Johnston cited by McKeown and Gentilucci (2007), claim that think-aloud serves firstly as a method of measuring the cognitive reading process, then as metacognitive tool to monitor comprehension. In that sense, the think aloud is appropriate for this study because through this strategy the students can monitor their comprehension process. Another definition of this strategy is provided by
Think-alouds are also used to model comprehension processes such as making predictions, creating images, linking information in text with prior knowledge, monitoring comprehension, and overcoming problems with word recognition or comprehension (Gunning, 1996 in teacher vision). These sub-strategies will be defined in the ensuing sections.

**Prior Knowledge**

Prior knowledge is a comprehension strategy which is modeled when using the think aloud. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) state that, "When children understand how to
connect the text they read to their lives, they begin to make connections between what they read and the larger world” (p. 92). This is very important because learners start to make connections about what they already know in order to construct meaning. An individual’s prior knowledge is known to be an important prerequisite for individual knowledge construction and learning outcome. Theoretical approaches stress the importance of learners’ prior knowledge when acquiring new learning material (Weinert & Helmke, cited by Bernhard & Heinz, 2009) and empirical studies show the influence of prior knowledge on individual learning outcomes (Kalyuga; Chandler & Sweller; Shapiro, cited by Bernhard & Heinz, 2009). These authors, explicit the importance that prior knowledge has when learning unknown content because a person can make connections to what they already know so that they can create meaning easier. Moreover, several studies have shown that when students activate their prior knowledge they are successful in school. Additionally, when students make connections about the content of the texts their reading comprehension increases (Christen et al, cited by Campbell, 2002)

**Predicting**

According to Rog (2001), predicting involves making educated guesses about what will come next in the story. It is, in a way, a form of inferring as readers must apply what they read in the text to what they already known in order to formulate their predictions (p. 117). During the process of predicting, readers compare what they already learned from a completed book to what they think is going to be read. At the same time readers continuously connect their prior knowledge to the text.
Robb (2000) cites Gillet and temple’s work, to point out that, “predictions are the connecting links between prior knowledge and new information in the book” (p. 120). This is important because in order to make predictions, readers need to activate their prior knowledge; in other words, prior knowledge and prediction work together. In order to make predictions some elements such as: the title of the text, illustrations, warmers, and key words are used for drawing inferences about the content or topic of the text (Dutta, 1994). Then, the title can be a starting point to engage and connect students to the text by making predictions about what they think might occur in the story.

Predicting has to do with anticipating what will happen next in the text. Students can use predicting in their thinking process to help them in making meaning (Block, Rodgers, & Johnson, cited by Zygouris-Coe & Glass, 2004). Hence, this strategy is very useful for this project since as it has been stated, reading comprehension involves making meaning from a text.

Some authors such as Honig, Diamond & Glutohn are cited by Kelley & Clausen-Grace (2007) to provide a relevant explanation about what predicting means “when readers predict they must engage with the text. They use their prior knowledge and the text to set up expectations of what will happen or what information the text will contain.” (p. 79). Likewise, with predictions students may set a purpose to read and they can anticipate what they will read (Lubliner cited by Kelley & Clausen-Grace 2007). In short, predictions take students to be engaged when reading the text, giving them a strong reason to keep reading and thinking what is about to come in the reading passage.
Visualizing

By using this strategy, readers can create images in their heads at the same time when they are reading. When these readers have the ability to create the images, constructing meaning becomes easier. Rog (2001) states that “when students visualize what they read, they are making meaning of text by combining the words of the page with what they already know to create a picture in their minds” (p. 117). In fact, visualizing is a form of making inferences with mental pictures instead of words.

Visualizations involve recreating with mental pictures what is happening in the written text. Through this reading comprehension tool, the reader becomes an inferential thinker for understanding more easily what is being read (Carrasquillo, Kucer & Abrams, 2004). When text becomes understandable for the reader, this not only facilitates the comprehension process but also keeps the reader motivated with the text. In similar way, Harvey and Goudvis (2000) state that "visualizing personalizes reading, keeps us engaged, and often prevents us from abandoning a book." (p. 97). If the reader thinks of stopping reading the text because this is boring, probably he needs to make visualizations to be motivated for keeping reading.

Another definition regarding visualizing is that it allows students the ability to become more engaged in their reading and use their imagery to draw conclusions, create interpretations of the text, and bring to mind details and elements from the text (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997).

To have an effective reading process, it is very important to bear in mind how students interact with each other and with the teacher in the classroom.
Classroom interaction

Classroom interaction is a relevant topic to bear in mind in this study since we are implementing the think-aloud strategy that promotes interactive behavior among students when reading. According to Pressley et al. cited by McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) “the think aloud is a joint process of teachers and students working together to construct understandings of text as they interact with it.” (p. 1). Therefore, we can say that the pattern of interaction is naturally embedded in a classroom where the think-aloud strategy is being used.

Consolo (2006) cites Cazden; Hall & Verplaatse to declare that “language classrooms can be seen as sociolinguistic environments and discourse communities in which interaction is believed to contribute to learners’ language development”. (p. 34). Similarly, Long’s Interaction Hypothesis cited by Consolo (2006) argues that “negotiation of meaning in verbal interactions contributes to the generation of input favorable for second language development” (p. 35). These assumptions of interaction reflect how students acquire knowledge by means of interaction. In the same way, it is claimed that when students and teachers interact with each other, they are able to create activities that shape the target language as well as the outcomes of each student development (Hall & Verplaatse cited by Consolo 2006). Thus, we argue that in interactive classrooms the teacher plays an important role. As suggested by Kelly and Verplaatse (2000), “the teachers mediate both the quality and the quantity of opportunities the students will have to participate in and learn from the activities”. (P. 10).

Classroom interaction enhances learning in two ways: through scaffolding, which refers to a mechanism that supports teachers and parents use to help students
accomplish more difficult task. And zone of proximal development which is the actual development level and the potential development that students have to develop a particular task. More to the point, it is claimed that tasks which are more challenging when done with the teachers’ scaffolding are more conducive to learning. (Vigotsky cited by Zuñiga, 2005).

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

The importance of having competent readers that may use their cognitive awareness has become essential aspects to achieve an enhancement in students’ English reading comprehension. Several studies have reported that the use of reading strategies can help students to develop their reading competences. Besides, how second-language middle-school students make use or not of their metacognitive awareness when using the think-aloud strategy, and the impact of this reading strategy towards students’ verbal protocols is also crucial in a reading comprehension process (Zabala, 2004; McKeown and Gentilucci, 2007; Gillam, Fargo and Robertson, 2009).

Zabala (2004) investigated how the development of reading competences by using reading strategies enhance eleventh graders’ reading comprehension in English among 31 eleventh-grade public school students Bogotá, Colombia. On the one hand, Zabala (2004) found that the students mainly used imagination, prediction, and translation to comprehend English text. Notwithstanding, the researcher also found that studying vocabulary and analysing the main idea of the text were the strategies most used by students. Zabala (2004) also highlighted that the use of imagination and dictionary by the students was evident in the data. The students also used predictions, translations and inferences to make sense of what they read. On the other hand, Zabala (2004) pointed out that students showed difficulties in the reading process and he
observed how students’ attitudes were evidenced when concerning their own mistakes and that these students simply did not continue working in class when they faced difficulties with the text. Zabala (2004) stated that students also had difficulties with handling implicit information, intensive reading, outlining, and scrambling stories strategies. This could have occurred due to the fact that students were guided unconsciously toward prediction rather than fulfilment of strategies which objective is the comprehension of the structure of the text. Another strong reason for explaining that students had difficulties with handling implicit information, intensive reading, outlining, and scrambling stories strategies is probably that they did not receive an instruction more explicit from the teacher.

In a study developed by McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) in an ESL context, they used quantitative methods to investigate how second-language middle-school students used their metacognitive awareness while reading using the think-aloud. The authors assert that a strategic reader is one who knows when and how to use the comprehensions strategies. In other words, when the reader gets involved in the reading and has an active dialogue with the text applying the proper fix-up strategies when needed this is what is called metacognitive awareness (Pritchard & Breneman, 2000).

McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) conducted their research with twenty-seven English learners with a reading proficiency level of early intermediate (Level 2), 5 early intermediate learners (level 2), 11 intermediate learners (level 3), and 11 early advanced learners (level 4) from a K-12 middle-public school. McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) found that the efficacy of the think aloud strategy depends on the unique needs of each particular level of proficiency. For example, findings for the early intermediate English learners suggested that the think-aloud strategy did not help improve the English
Think-aloud for reading comprehension in tenth graders

learners' comprehension of expository text because early intermediate English learners are not able to decode and make sense of vocabulary and syntax in their second language. In other words, if students do not have the second language proficiency level which is needed to use metacognitive strategies such as think aloud, then these students are not going to successfully comprehend text. In contrast to the early intermediate English learners, McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) found that for the intermediate students the data suggested measurable growth in students' reading comprehension. Seven of 11 students increased their post-test score, 2 remained the same, and 2 scored lower on the post-test than on the pre-test. The researchers explain this finding as related to the students’ L2 knowledge of vocabulary and decoding ability (fluency). That is, the students’ second language proficiency level is high enough to allow them to become successful readers with proper modelling and practice of the think aloud strategy. However, unlike the outcomes reflected by the intermediate students, McKeown and Gentilucci (2007) found that for most of the early advanced students the think-aloud metacognitive strategy actually hindered reading comprehension (i.e., 8 of 11 had lower post-test scores, 2 had higher post-test scores, and 1 remained the same.) The researchers argue that for the early advanced students the think aloud can be counterproductive because these readers already possessed metacognitive skills in their second language, and they did not need to make metacognition covert through the use of think-aloud to increase comprehension. In short, think-aloud may be counterproductive for early advanced English learners who have already developed self-monitoring comprehension skills. McKeown and Gentilucci’s findings (2007) concluded saying that the most important lesson drawn from their study is that teachers should not make the mistake of considering all reading comprehension strategies as "good teaching" and apply them equally to all levels of English learners.
Another study of Gillam, Fargo, & Robertson (2009) related to the implementation of the think-aloud strategy. They investigated whether children between 9 to 10 years old with and without language impairment [LI] produce similar kinds of statements while thinking aloud about expository text, and to examine the potential relationships among statements, comprehension, and verbal working memory between and within groups. The researchers investigated 40 fourth-grade children, 20 children with typical language [TL] (12 African American, 8 Caucasian) who ranged in age from 9 and other 20 children with language impairment [LI] (16 African American, 3 Caucasian, and 1 Hispanic) who ranged in age from 10. The participating children attended to one of two county schools in the US South.

Gillam, Fargo & Robertson (2009) presented their findings under two main sections: “verbal protocol data”; and “associations between verbal protocols, comprehension, and verbal working memory-implication of think aloud methodology”. The first aim of this study was to examine the verbal protocol data, at this point, the author compared groups on the kinds of statements generated while thinking aloud. They also highlight how statements generated by students during the think aloud task consisted mainly of paraphrases. Besides, these paraphrases were used significantly more often than exact repetitions or implicit statements. Consequently, Gillam, Fargo and Robertson (2009) compared their findings with other findings reported by Laing & Kamhi, (2002); Suh, (1989); Trabasso & Magliano, (1996) about narrative text, in which these latter authors evidenced that one narrative comprehension, verbal protocols consist mainly of inferences rather than paraphrases. Likewise, Trabasso & Magliano, (1996) studied verbal protocols generated by 24 third-grade children and showed that the majority of statements constituted inferences. Thus, the main difference made in
prior studies investigating narrative in the statements and in Gillam, Fargo & Robertson’s (2009) study which is investigating expository text, is just the ratio of paraphrases to inferences. In short, the findings highlighted by Gillam, Fargo & Robertson (2009) suggested that [TL] children were more likely to generate paraphrases than inferences while thinking aloud about expository text. The students in this study also showed a little bit use of inferences during think aloud task; in the typical language [TL] group, students produced noticeably more explanatory than predictive inferences. In addition, the author found that in the language impairment (LI) group, students had more difficulties at the moment of understanding a text with complex vocabulary than those who belonged to the typical language [TL] group.

The second aim of this study was to examine the association between the type of statements in verbal protocols, comprehension performance and verbal working memory. The authors evidenced that children who produced accurate paraphrases were more likely to perform better on measures of comprehension than children who produced inaccurate paraphrases. Gillam, Fargo & Robertson (2009) reported that the production of inferences is highly linked to narrative text and the production of paraphrases to expository text. They also pointed out that there is a strategy that helps students with learning disabilities to improve reading comprehension, which is called RAP (read a paragraph), this strategy consists on reading a paragraph and identify a main idea and paraphrase it in the reader’s own words. However, there are a number of steps that need to be followed by (LI) students in order to make this strategy effective. Finally, the researcher found some implications of the think aloud methodology, in the findings they reported that it is possible to answer comprehension question without understanding the text. Similarly, they also mentioned that recall tasks help students to remember some information about a passage rather than comprehend it. These authors
highlight that students with LI also have memory limitations that may interfere with the successful performance on reading. Moreover, they also pointed out how clinicians should use think aloud methodology to examine verbal protocols of children with comprehension problems.
CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN

TYPE OF STUDY:

Our study is a qualitative inquiry based on the researchers’ observations and interpretations, and students’ opinions and responses when using the think-aloud strategy. Besides, the methods implemented in this research such as journals, interviews and audio recordings are typical of qualitative research. Qualitative research methods allow researchers to reveal participants' opinions and perspectives which do not emerge through quantitative research methods frequently (Greenbaum 1998 and Mason, 1996).

As this research is based on research observations and interpretations, Flowers and Moore (2003) argue that “the primary objective of qualitative research is to obtain information by exploring, identifying, and examining an issue by questioning, engaging, and/or observing those individuals who are involved with, affected by, and/or familiar with the issue under study”. (p. 2) Thus, developing a qualitative study aligns with the purpose of this study which is to inquire, describe and analyse deeply the learners’ responses at the moment of implementing think aloud strategy.

As it was mentioned before, in the statement of the problem, and in several parts of this paper we identified a situation in regards to reading problems in tenth students. These reading problems were later corroborated with a diagnostic test. Consequently, we made a decision to look for accurate solutions to solve these difficulties; having the implementation of think-alouds in tenth grades as a probable solution to this concern. Based on the process we followed to carry out this project we can say that we also used some aspects of action research.

Cárdenas (2000) states that “Action research involves the collection and analysis of data related to some aspect of our professional practice: the application and effects of
teaching methods, learning strategies, cognitive styles, classroom interaction, roles of teachers and learners, among others. This is done so that we can reflect on what we have discovered and apply it to our professional action”. This definition embedded all the process we developed in our pre-service teaching since we could apply a reading strategy, collect data from our practice, and be involved in a constant interaction with students when applying the think aloud in the classroom. Additionally, our roles were as teachers as researchers in the learning setting.

Therefore, we opted for taking as reference some aspects of action research in this project when doing our pre-service teaching. With the purpose of illustrating in a better way these aspects, we will explain the following cyclical process or steps that we followed through this study, according to Cárdenas (2000) these steps are:

1) Identify an issue, interest or problem.
2) Seek knowledge.
3) Plan an action.
4) Implement the action.
5) Observe the action.
6) Reflect on your observations.
7) Revise the plan.

When we started our pre-service teaching, we identified a problem in terms of students’ reading comprehension. We drew this interpretation due to the fact that when doing a reading activity in a tenth group we noticed that students had some comprehension problems when they read an English text. For this reason, we wanted to corroborate this perception conducting a diagnostic test in the three tenth grades in which we were in charge of. After analysing those results, we confirmed with the students’ results that these students had actually reading comprehension difficulties when they answered the questions (see figure 3 in the findings section). Those low results obtained in the diagnostic test reminded us of the ICFES test which stipulated that Colombian students’ results were low-middle ranked. In fact, these ICFES results
were also part of what Cárdenas stipulates as the first step of the action research cycle (for further explanation see the statement of the problem).

After identifying the reading comprehension problem, we followed the second step stipulated by Cárdenas that consists on seeking information about what reading strategies could be implemented in order to help students to enhance their comprehension when they read a text in English. In this search for information we found that the think-aloud strategy was an excellent tool which students could use to construct meaning from a reading passage. (Read the lit review and relevant definitions, for having a deep understanding)

Then, we decided to plan an action which is the third step that Cárdenas suggests when carrying out action research. This plan consisted on developing the think aloud strategy in every pre-service teaching class. In these classes, we wanted to teach students how to use the think-aloud strategy when approaching a text (to have a deep explanation read the instructional design).

After planning how the think-aloud sessions would be, we implemented then the think-aloud strategy with these students but focusing mainly on the use of sub-reading strategies such as prior knowledge, predicting, and visualizing. According to Cárdenas this is another action research step, which is called, implement the action (continue seeing the instructional design).

Subsequently, we wanted to observe how the students’ performances and responses were at the time of implementing the think-aloud strategy in the reading activities. Besides, we also wanted to observe the impact generated by the use of the think aloud in students’ reading comprehension. In order to observe and analyze in a deeper way these aspects related to think-loud, we used methods such as: journals,
audio recordings and interviews. This is the fifth step suggested by Cárdenas in action research that is called, to observe the action (go to the findings section to have a complete description of this step).

The following step that Cárdenas also suggested is to reflect on the observations collected through the instruments mentioned above. What we did in this step was to analyse our data and compare it with theories and other studies related to think aloud. With the aim of discussing whether the strategy helped to improve reading comprehension in students or not (For more detail, see research design).

Action research is empirical, though the collected data is typically qualitative and interpretive. Data can be collected through audio-taped observations, interviews, action experiments and participant-written cases. (Argyris et al., cited by Baskerville, 1999). Therefore, we decided to apply four methods to collect the data for our project.

**Researcher’s Journals**

One of our purposes in this investigation was to record in detail how students responded to the execution of the think-aloud strategy. That is why, at the end of each pre-service teaching session we wrote every single detail of the reading activity itself, in a journal. According to Freeman (1998) “journals record the thoughts, feelings, reflections, and observations of the writer. They may be focused on a specific lesson, activity, or student, or they can describe the writer’s more general day – to day thinking or questions. And its purpose is to identify issues, puzzles, or questions in teaching” (p.210). This was a strong reason to use journals to collect data in our project, due to the fact that through journals we were able to do a deeper examination when analysing the data collected thorough this method. In short, journals helped us to record students’
responses as well as our performance as teachers when modelling and implementing the think-aloud strategy.

**Audio Recordings of Think Alouds**

In our investigation, we intended to get every situation that we could not perceive at the time of developing the think alouds. Hence, the use of audio recordings gave us the opportunity to record the interactions that occurred during instructions. With the use of this method, we had the advantage of capturing on tape, any spoken event that occurred in the classroom between teacher-students and among students. As Freeman (1998) illustrates, “an audio recording captures spoken interactions in the activities or lessons, and the purpose is to capture the oral interactions in an activity or lesson between teacher and students and among students” (p. 208). Therefore, we wanted to use this method because using it we could have the opportunity to capture the spoken interaction of students when developing the think aloud.

**Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are aimed to be conducted with an open structure which allows giving and receiving information from the person who is being interviewed. Not all questions are designed and phrased ahead of time. The majority of questions are created during the interview, allowing both the interviewer and the interviewee the flexibility to discuss issues in more detail (Davis-Case, 1990). Thus, in this study it was determined to use a semi-structured interview with only five students who were active participants of the study. We chose this kind of interview because we were willing to discuss with the students about their perceptions in regards to the think-aloud activities performed by these students. Moreover, we wanted to make students
who agreed to have this interview, to feel more comfortable as well as more autonomous when answering the questions. We also decided to implement this semi-structured interview due to the fact that some questions could have emerged at the moment of doing the interview. Another main reason to use this method was because it facilitated to gather all the amount of information necessary to analyse students’ feelings and perceptions during think-alouds.

Archival Data (reading materials)

All the authentic materials such as the short stories used along the process with students are very important when collecting data about the performance of these students. Freeman (1998) in regards to archival data declares that “are anything produced by the teacher, students, the administration, or the parents in conjunction with classroom teaching and learning. This material reflects what is happening inside, and possibly outside the classroom.” (p.205). Freeman also emphasizes the purpose of this method claiming that it is useful for capturing data from material generated through, and in conjunction with, the teaching and learning process. Taking as reference what Freeman stipulates above, the teaching and learning process evidenced by what students produced when using the reading materials. That is why archival data was another way in which we could collect data because these reading materials (see annex 2), let us to conduct all the reading sessions using the think-aloud strategy.

Tests

The diagnostic test and the final test (see annex 4) were also considered as a method for this study because by means of these tests, we were able to see how the students’ reading comprehension processes were after implementing the think-aloud strategy.
PARTICIPANTS AND CONTEXT

The participants for this project at the beginning of the pre-service teaching were 37 tenth graders (see figure 1) at a state school in Pereira, Colombia. The course in which we developed the think-aloud activities was made up by (16 females and 21 males) and the average age was 16 years old. However, at the end of the process only 12 students (9 females and 3 males) attended and with them we carried out the final test (see figure 2).
The institution in which this research took place belongs to a social zone of the 3 and 4 strata; this means that the population that attend this high school is mixed in terms of socio-economical status. According to our educational system, tenth and eleventh grades are divided into modalities. In this state high school specifically these modalities are: information systems (sistemas de información), commercial administration (administración comercial), electricity (electricidad), science academic (académica ciencia), constructions (construcciones) and humanities (humanidades). It is relevant to say that students who were part of the whole process and were tested at the end of the same, were part of the following modalities: constructions (construcciones) 2, commercial administration (administración comercial) 1 and humanities (humanidades) 9. We remark this latter modality because has emphasis in English and Spanish language as well. Thus, the students from this modality were more able to read, recognize, and comprehend text easier.

**ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER**

In qualitative research studies the researcher plays the role of data collection instrument because the researcher is the one who collects data by observing, interviewing, examining records and documents in the research setting, and sometimes he combines all these methods (Mertens, 1998). In our study we play the role of complete participants because we as researchers became natural participants in this process. Additionally, we had to face the disadvantage of trying to collect data and maintain a questioning and reflective stance. (Mertens, 1998).
INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

As we mentioned above in our research design, every single session was part of our pre-service teaching practice. The practical sessions using think-alouds lasted about two months, in which we conducted ten reading activities employing the strategy in tenth grades. Then, in these think aloud activities, short stories in English were used in black and white and were handed out to students. We chose short stories having in mind students’ reading proficiency because we believe short stories fit the proficiency level of these students.

In the second session, we modelled the think-aloud strategy implementing the story called “I made a mistake” (see annex 3) for showing students how to use this strategy while reading. We firstly organized the classroom in a semi-circle. Subsequently, we began to read this passage from the title of the story “I made a mistake”, saying out loud possible situations that could emerge during the reading (predicting), having in mind the title as a main reference. Apart from the title, we also made some stops while reading the short story with the purpose of making more predictions that could occur in the story. After doing the predicting step, we told students that prediction is a useful comprehension strategy. Besides, we highlighted and told students the importance of using our own experiences and knowledge to interpret and understand any type of text. Students were also told by us that when we make connections with something that we have already experienced, it becomes easier to comprehend what is being read.

We as teachers also made pauses to point out the most relevant ideas and to check if the reading was making sense. We continued reading and making visualizations of specifics situations of the text. For example, when the story presented information
about the weather, we asked students to imagine what the setting would look like and students had to infer and create a mental image of the weather of the story. Likewise, we wanted to show students the importance of visualizing in a reading process because it makes the reader to be part of story and become more engaged. We continued doing more stops for checking if there was a clear understanding of the text, if not, we got backwards and we read again and if there was any unknown word we used the context to give meaning to what we read before. Then, we explained the students that we as readers not necessarily need to know all the words in the text.

In the following sessions, in the last 30 minutes of each class, students were the only ones who developed think-aloud in the reading activity with our supervision. The lay out of the classroom was in a semi-circle again and students had the chance to read a part of the short story. However, as the reading was in English, sometimes we helped students a little bit only reading the text, and also telling them where to do the stop in order for students to make their predictions and visualizations. We elicited information from students asking questions such as: “what do you think this story is going to be about?” The predictions made by these students were in Spanish because they did not have the proficiency level for doing such predictions in English. Then, we continued with the reading asking them to visualize the situation. Consequently, they started to evoke and say out loud all the images that came from the reading. This visualizing process was done during the whole reading, at the end we realized if all the predictions made at the beginning were wrong or right.

The rest of the reading sessions were developed only by students, including the reading itself, we simply assisted them saying where to predict, visualize and make sure that they were using their prior knowledge. These reading sessions were audio recorded
for analysis. At the same time when doing these think-aloud sessions, we were collecting the data.

DATA ANALYSIS

When we gathered all the data we immediately transcribed and printed all the amount of information out that we had collected from the methods to take these transcriptions of the data to our thesis advisor. He helped us highlight or omit information related to our study from the transcriptions, with the purpose of analyzing it and incorporating easily to our research findings chapter. At this point, we will describe the process that was carried out to collect and analyse our data from the journals, audio-recordings and interviews.

The teachers’ journals were written immediately after each think-aloud session, because we did not want to miss any single detail at the time of analysing the data. It was expected that this method could give us more opportunities to know if the reading activities proposed by us were well oriented or not. Moreover, the journals also gave us the opportunity to reflect and modify the activities and the chance to see whether students were improving in their reading comprehension. These journals were analysed focused mainly on highlighting the relevant issues of our investigation. To be more explicit, we emphasized on different situations in which students were asked for making predictions and visualizations. We determined if the questions that we as teachers made for checking understandings were clear or not and if we let the students made their predictions and visualizations accurately in regards to the characteristics of the text. Therefore, the analyses of the journals were made after every single session with the
purpose of making our performance stronger in the following instructional sessions using think alouds.

In order to collect the students’ performance in the sessions, we audio-recorded five think aloud activities. After recording these sessions, we immediately transcribed them in order to make the analysis of the think aloud data easier when grouping this information. We were focused on highlighting issues such as comprehension, visualizations and predictions since, those were our goals to observe carefully when implementing the think aloud strategy. Hence, the analyses of the transcriptions of the audio recordings helped us to have a better perspective of how the students’ performances were, in regards to the application of the think-aloud strategy.

At the end of the process, we conducted the semi-structured interview. After that, we piloted it with two tenth students who attended to the reading sessions. It is very important to mention that this pilot was conducted in their students’ native language (Spanish). These students who were interviewed answered ten questions about their views in regards to the reading activities utilizing the think-aloud strategy. After piloting the interview, we had another advising session, and our advisor suggested some changes in two questions which were not well elaborated as well as some things we had to keep in mind at the time of developing the interview. After that feedback provided by our thesis advisor, we conducted the semi-structured interview with 4 more students who were active participants in the think aloud activities. It is important to report that the implementation of the semi-structured interview was taken by the tenth students four months later when ended the process.

Subsequently, from the interviewees’ answers we transcribed and highlighted aspects that we considered very relevant to our project such as students’ opinions,
responses and reactions towards the reading activities we designed. We analyzed every answer of each interview including the pilots with the purpose of finding commonalities that we could report in our findings session.

After having all the information organized, we decided to code the samples taken from each one of the instruments (journals, audio recordings and interviews including the piloted interviews) which we used to collect our data. The purpose of putting these codes to the data was with the aim of locating the information in the transcriptions more easily. The codes were organized as following: when the data came from the journals we assigned the letter “J”, from the audio-recordings we assigned the letters “AR”, and from the interviews we assigned the letter “I”; when the data came from the interview pilots we assigned the letters “IPT”. Besides, we put the number of the think-aloud session together with the letters assigned for the methods mentioned previously plus the number of the lines, where the information was taken from. An example of one of these codes is: “AR 1 L 50-52” (audio-recording 1, from line 50 to 52).

Once the data was transcribed, we put all the issues that had similar characteristics into the following categories: Students’ negotiation of meaning through group interaction, contribution of reading strategy instruction in English skills, building understanding through think-alouds, prior knowledge as a means of making connections, a prevalent use of visualizing and predicting strategies for comprehension, and students’ responses to reading instruction using think-aloud. After analyzing all these findings, we decided to group them and make new categories, in order to develop our discussion of the findings more effectively. The findings were grouped in the following way:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
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| Think alouds: its effects in Students’ negotiation of meaning through group interaction, English language skills, and students’ reading comprehension. | Students’ negotiation of meaning through group interaction  
Students’ perceptions about English language improvement apart from reading comprehension  
Building understanding through think-aloud instructions |
| Strategic components of the think-aloud process: visualizing, predicting, and prior knowledge | Evoking prior knowledge as a means of making connections  
A prevalent use of visualizing and predicting strategies for comprehension |
| Students’ responses to reading instruction using think-alouds | Students’ responses to reading instruction using think-alouds |
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In the following sections we will present our expected and unexpected findings.

1. Students’ negotiation of meaning through group interaction: we perceived how through the use of developing the think aloud in a whole group interaction, comprehension took place. Our perception was confirmed by some students in their interviews, some students said that “Es mucho más fácil cuando uno hace las cosas en equipo…” (I 2 L 30). It means that interaction in the classroom was essential for reading comprehension because whole group interaction engaged him to develop reading tasks more easily and to be more involved in the class topic. Here are some other samples that confirmed our perceptions.

I 2 L 66-67 “... pues, en éste tipo de actividades desarrollamos muchas capacidades que fue como el trabajo en equipo, la escucha, la imaginación y todo esto”

I 4 L 38-41 “cuando uno está en un grupo y lee en voz alta, uno también empieza a recibir todo y a entender y así le ayudan a uno, si me entiende? entonces así se le aclaran más fácil las ideas y no se, se comprende más fácil”

In these samples, it is noticed how students through negotiation of meaning can achieve a better understanding, sharing in this manner their thoughts about the reading task.

Below, there is an excerpt from a reading activity that shows the interaction promoted by the think aloud.

AR 2 L 15-26

“Teacher: Uds. ven las figuras y que sacan ahí....de.............
Student 1: el gato!!!!!!!
Student 7: ah que el se va a tirar de un techo.........
Student 2: ay un gatooo que llora
Student 3: y..Que se va a caer.............
Student 6: que lo atropello un bus
Teacher: que lo atropello un bus……………..
Student 5: nooooooo, que se va a caer de un árbol, y que la hermanita llora y q va a pasar un carro y q el carro lo va a
Teacher: tan cruel… que se imaginan q va a pasar ahí en esa historia
Student 4: que se murió ………”

It has been noticed in this sample that several students made their contributions with the purpose of making meaning from what they were reading, using a reading strategy like visualizing. A sample taken from a researcher’s journal also reflects the importance of interaction when negotiating meaning

J 2 L 7-9  “I have seen a good environment in the reading sessions because students have been willing to discuss and participate with the reading passages. Thus, students actively shared their ideas among them”

Through the implementation of the think-aloud strategy, the reading comprehension process in the classroom became more meaningful, because all students participated actively for constructing meaning from the reading passages. In addition, throughout these group works students also created a comfortable learning setting. Another sample that reflects the students’ interaction is shown next.

AR 5 L 23-32

“Teacher: hasta ahí que entienden ustedes, que paso con el pan
Student 3: lo puso sobreeee el plato
Student 1: la sopa, lo puso sobre la sopa
Student 5: sobre el olor de la sopa, ve sobre los cositos de la sopa, creo yo
Teacher: el steam es el (use of gestures)………
Student 5: el vapor
Teacher: y lo puso dentro de la sopa o donde lo puso el
Student 1: y Student 4: nooo!,
Student 6: sobre la sopa……..
Student 2: sobre”
It is noticeable how several students interacted in this excerpt from a reading activity, providing their opinions in order to interpret what they were reading. Some entries from the interviews show how students felt about the interaction promoted by the think-aloud strategy.

*I 3 L 65-68* “hmm por qué? Por lo que te dije ahí, que uno se sentía bien por que todos compartíamos las opiniones que pensábamos o que predecíamos y las compartíamos y ya luego empezamos a leer el texto y organizábamos todas las predicciones y miramos cuál era la correcta”

*I 4 L 19-21* “me parece chévere porque uno puede hablar lo que uno piensa, contarlo para que otra persona le ayude a mejorar su pensamiento, no sé, le dé sus opiniones…

Students felt more comfortable at the time of hearing different point of views from their classmates. Since, these students could corroborate what they thought about specific issues of the reading.

2. **Students’ perceptions about English language improvement apart from reading comprehension:** we speculate that through the use of think-aloud students did not only work on reading comprehension but also on skills such as listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary.

*I 2 L 66-67* “… pues, en éste tipo de actividades desarrollamos muchas capacidades que fue como el trabajo en equipo, la escucha, la imaginación y todo esto”

*I 4 L 148 – 150* “uno va escuchándose a uno mismo o a otra persona y va comprendiendo el vocabulario, las palabras que esta utilizando se va dando una idea de que esta hablando sin tener que escucharse todo el texto”.

These two students agreed that during the think-aloud activities there was an improvement on some of their communicative skills, in this particular case, in listening.
In the interview, students also mentioned how think-aloud activities reflected in certain manner the development of different skills: “*por ejemplo vocabulario, eh como en expresión, en vocalización*” (*I 3 L 107*)

A part of the class was not only based on vocabulary but as the sample says also in terms of pronunciation. In the following sample, a piece of a reading passage and some students’ opinions are shown, with the aim of supporting what the student said previously in regards to vocabulary and pronunciation aspects:

*AR 2 L 123-127*

**Student 3:** Como se dice hermano  
**Teacher:** brother  
**Student 3:** y si es hermano y hermana  
**Student 1, student 7:** brothers  
**Teacher:** brother and sister

These students who took part of these reading lines were interested in learning new vocabulary to have a clear understanding of what they just read. In the following excerpts we will see how students perceived a positive impact in their pronunciation

*IPT 1 L 73-74* “*a hacer muchas cosas, a hacer, cómo se dice, la traducción la cómo es... a pronunciar bien*”

*I 4 L 68* “*uno aprende a corregir lo que no sabe pronunciar,...*”

These statements showed clearly the students’ perceptions towards an improvement of an important aspect of language such as pronunciation. A possible reason to explain this change of their pronunciation, and vocabulary as previously shown, could be
because in the interaction between teacher and students there was an immediate feedback provided by the teachers as it is noticed in the ensuing extracts.

*AR 3 L 36-43*

“**Student:** near the register I saw
**teacher:** saw
**student:** saw some pakes
**teacher:** packaged
**student:** packaged cookies in a large...
**teacher:** in a large...
**student:** bin
**teacher:** bin”

It is noticed how the teacher made several efforts to teach pronunciation right from the beginning. Otherwise, these students likely would have the same failures in a future.

*AR 4 L 102-113*

“**Student:** we left the store and looked for a place where we could eat, eat
**Teacher:** could eat, eat
**Student:** como el profesor de Ingles dice ........
**Teacher:** yeah, no, eat
**Student:** eat, we, we que?
**Teacher:** we found
**Student:** we found a quite place
**Teacher:** we found a quite place
**Student:** quite place under a tree and we at our sanduches, sanduches frios and the cookies we thought they were grit
**Teacher:** great
**Student:** great”

The pronunciation in the think-aloud activities played an important role; since all the students in the reading activities were listening carefully the story. Therefore, if the reader was not aware of this issue, probably, his classmates would have misunderstood the story.
The role of the teacher was also a vital element in thinking alouds, since he was a support for the students when performing the reading as it is illustrated by a student in his interview next:

*I I L 59 – 61* “...uno no se sentía presionado por los profesores porque ellos le daban su espacio, le daba el momento a uno para leer, le ayudaban en las pronunciaciones, en las palabras que uno no conocía y así no había ningún problema con la lectura.”

The help that teachers provided to their students when it was necessary became significant for the language learning process that students were being through. Some examples of what we have just said are presented in the following reading piece taken from an activity:

3. **Building understanding through think-aloud instructions:** observational data shows that when applying the reading strategies such as predicting, visualizing and prior knowledge students were able to construct meaning from the texts. Below a sample that supports this finding is presented:

*AR 2 L 128- 142*

“**Teacher:** so, it was now 5 o’clock…..mucho ruido…….hey pay attention to this point and you have to tell me the context, the scenario yeah? , it was now 5 o’clock, and Mrs. Wilson said: it was time for her to go home, so she put on her hat her coat and gloves and Mrs. Smith (**teacher using body language**)

**Student 6:** put her…..

**Teacher:** yeah, ponerse……. Entonces si eran las 5 y la señora se puso todo eso ustedes que creen ahí o sea, que día era o que, o estaban en que en verano o…

**Student 2:** era invierno

**Teacher:** era invierno claro, por que

**Student 1:** por que ella se puso un poco de cosas

**Teacher:** gloves, coat hat

**Student 1:** Ella se puso el gorro
The help provided by the teacher in this sample, became essential for those students at the moment of reading the story, because the teacher asked them to use a reading strategy such as visualizing when it was necessary to accomplish a better comprehension of the text in the students. Next, we will see samples of interviews in which students reported how these think alouds helped them to have a better comprehension of English texts used along the reading sessions:

I 1 L 77 “me ha ayudado ha mejorar mi comprensión de lectura en ingles”
I 2 L 73-74 “pues ha sido algo productivo, fue algo que para mi ayudó, influyó en mi capacidad de comprensión…”

These students illustrated how through the use of the think aloud strategy they achieved a change in their reading comprehension process. We want to corroborate this change, with the following samples taken from some reading sessions:

AR 4 L 114-130

“Teacher: hasta ahí que
Student 1: después de que pararon y vieron la comida que había allá
Teacher: las galletas si
Student 1: bueno entonces pagaron y quedaron .......... entonces se pararon y vieron un árbol... tree no es árbol? ....... se fueron como por allá a pararse en una… jejeje
Student 7: yo también
Thinkaloud for reading comprehension in tenth graders

Student 1: entonces después de eso, cogieron unos sanduches primero....... y las galletas cuando ellos iban a..... No se que mas........ bueno si que ellos se pararon y entonces después de que vieron la comida mas barata se pararon y como que se pusieron a pensar que más iban a comprar mas barato y cogieron unos sanduches... yo no se

This sample illustrated how this student tried to make a partial comprehension of the text when asked for comprehension. In the same passage the student said:

Teacher: miremos ésta...... Let’s get these again, I said, they are cheap and they are really good.
Student 1: le get ..... bueno si eso...............que significa let’s get para empezar?..........es que no se que significa eso
Teacher: tomémoslas de Nuevo
Student 1: ahhh bueno entonces ellos cogieron eso otra vez y entonces después lo.........
Teacher: son baratas y realmente son buenas ..........y psssss no tenemos mas plata vamos a…
Student 1: y como no tenían mas plata cogieron lo que habían ..........lo primero que había”

It is clearly how teacher instruction at this point became a main support for the student who was intending to make sense of what he read, because the teacher was not only asking for understanding but also using gestures in order to give students some clues about what was being read as it is shown in the next sample:

AR 5  L 23-32

“Teacher: hasta ahí que entiendan ustedes, que paso con el pan
Student 3: lo puso sobreeee el plato
Student 1: la sopa, lo puso sobre la sopa
Student 5: sobre el olor de la sop...... ve sobre los cositos de la sopa, creo yo
Teacher: el steam es el (use of gestures).........
Student 5: el vapor
Teacher: y lo puso dentro de la sopa o donde lo puso el
Student 1: y Student 4: noooo!,
Student 6: sobre la sopa......
Student 2: sobre”
The role of the teacher as mentioned before was very crucial when students were performing the reading activity, since; only the teacher knew where exactly he could make pauses in the story in order to ask students to report what they are thinking about the story in that certain moment. Accordingly, this reading piece was a clear example that in all the reading sessions carried out the students had their opportunity for participating and showing their comprehension about the text. Another observation taken from the researcher’s journals related to the change produced by the think aloud strategy in students’ reading comprehension is presented below:

J 8 L 1-5 “I have noticed that somehow students comprehend what they read supported by their predictions and visualizations. While reading is taking place students respond to questions like what did you understand..., what do you think about... , so far what is the main idea and their responses are good enough according to the process that is being carried out with the think-aloud strategy.

The use of visualizing and predicting as reading-comprehension strategies was essential for the students, because they were able to recognize and interpret the situations in the story due to the use of these strategies.

Another very important aspect that has led as to conclude that students had a positive impact in their reading comprehension process, apart from the interviews and from the audio recordings, is the results shown in the final reading test (see figure 4) after using the think aloud, the results are the following:

(Figure 3, Diagnostic test)
As it is represented in the previous graphics, it evidences how students obtained better results after the implementation of the think-aloud strategy. If we make a comparison between the diagnostic and the final test, it can be seen clearly how the majority of these students (7 out of 12) who took the final test were located at the high rank, whereas, in the diagnostic test the majority of the students (20 out of 37) were located at the low rank. It is also very significant to remark how in the final test at the low rank any student was located there.

4. Evoking prior knowledge as a means of making connections: this finding has to do with the knowledge that students and/or readers have about the world. This was a strategy that students used naturally and was important because most of the time, students make associations of the reading with similar situations which they have faced and this may generate a partial or total understanding of the text. In an interview a student reported an interesting perception about the use of prior knowledge:

*I L 44-47 “pues si porque me ayuda a saber de que cuando se hace una lectura mas que todo en otro idioma que uno no conoce, uno debe utilizar los recursos que ya tiene y colocar las palabras que ya conoce, guiarse con los verbos que ya conoce, los pronombres porque igualmente las propias lecturas le dan a conocer con el resto de lo que uno conoce, lo que no conoce”.*

When the reader faced a foreign text, he has should used his prior knowledge to construct meaning from that text. For this reason, the student pointed out above that he could make use of all the resources that he had (prior knowledge) to understand the text, contextualizing known words with unknown ones. In the same think-aloud activities, students made use of their prior knowledge regularly as is shown in the following excerpt.
In this sample, when students were reading a passage from the reading text, it was noticed how they made a relationship between that passage and something similar that they had already heard before. It is to say that those students brought up their knowledge into the reading with the purpose of making the reading text more meaningful.

We as researchers also had our perceptions about how students were making use of their prior knowledge. The ensuing entry represents our perceptions:

In this sample it is shown how the students made their predictions and interpretations when they found similarities between aspects of the story and aspects of their background knowledge.

5. A prevalent use of visualizing and predicting strategies for comprehension:

The observation of our data suggests that students through the use of visualizing and predicting made sense of how the characters were like and what the stories were about. Consequently, this led to an understanding of the reading texts used along the activities because through these reading strategies students felt like if they were inside the story.
In order to support this observation, a student in his interview said the following:

“...uno le pone más atención, como que se mete en la película y es súper” (I3 L 60 – 61).

Some other comments provided by students regarding visualizing strategy, are presented next:

I 2 L 39-40 “...las imágenes, cuando uno se expresa, son muy importantes, las imágenes son un apoyo para llegar algo concreto…”

When students started to have ideas about the story in their minds by using mental images, they could express themselves more easily at the time of drawing conclusions about what they were reading. Other interview data confirms our hunches about the importance of the use of images:

I 2 L 41-44 “las imágenes así no las tuviéramos físicamente fueron de gran ayuda porque imaginándolas porque nos ayudaba a entender mucho mejor la situación, cuando uno se mete en la película, cuando uno se va creando el desarrollo de la lectura y pues en forma de imágenes”.

I 1 L 50-51 “pues nos ayudó de una manera buena porque si uno se imagina algo que esta leyendo es no sé cómo... montarse en la película por decirlo asi y es más fácil de entenderlo”.

In order to understand the reading texts used along the think aloud activities in a better way, students started to represent the situations of the story in their minds; this mental process is known as visualizing. We also identified how students mentioned the phrase “montarse en la película” several times, what they meant by this phrase is that when students used visualizations, they felt like if they were inside the story so that they could easily understand what they read. Thus the mental process of creating images in students’ mind, in addition to the feeling of being part of the story led students to have
not only a better understanding of the reading text but also to be more involved with the reading task.

When a text has several images, this characteristic might take students to be engaged with the visualization of story setting. Next, an extract taken from a reading-session will be shown:

*AR 2 L 15-26*

*Teacher:* Uds. ven las figuras y que sacan ahí....de.............
*Student 1:* el gato!!!!!!!
*Student 7:* ah que el se va a tirar de un techo........
*Student 2:* ay un gatooo que llora
*Student 3:* y...Que se va a caer................
*Student 6:* que lo atropello un bus
*Teacher:* que lo atropello un bus...............
*Student 5:* nooooooo, que se va a caer de un árbol, y que la hermanita llora y q va a pasar un carro y q el carro lo va a
*Teacher:* tan cruel... que se imaginan q va a pasar ahí en esa historia
*Student 4:* que se murió ............”

When the texts had illustrations, it became easier for students to represent the possible situations that could have happened in the story. Besides that, by means of images students could feel as if they had been part of the story. Hence, when the students used visualizing as a reading strategy, they had a clearer idea about how the story looked like and what it was going to be about.

*I 4 L 45-48* “pues porque... vea, cierto, uno leía y si y vuelvo y repito, muy complicado leer uno en ingles porque uno no sabe mucho, entonces uno ya usted le decía que se imaginara algo entonces uno ya ponía la imaginación a volar ahí un poquito y ya empezaba a imaginarse las cosas e iba comprendiendo, y así y a imaginarse muñequitos tan ahí o algo así’’
Even though the following excerpt is repeated in our findings, we want to highlight here, how students made use of their visualizations in a reading activity:

*Teacher:* Entonces si eran las 5 y la señora se puso todo eso Uds. que creen ahí o sea, que día era o que, o estaban en que en verano

*Student 2:* era invierno
*Teacher:* era invierno claro, por que
*Student 1:* por que ella se puso un poco de cosas
*Teacher:* gloves, coat hat
*Student 1:* ella se puso el gorro.”

These two examples showed that when teachers encouraged students to use imagination as a comprehension tool, students moved from literal decoding towards a conscious mental process in which they provided their own perspectives and meanings to the text based on their background knowledge to make their visualizations of the story.

Our data also showed the prevalent use of predicting in the development of the think-aloud activities. Next, some samples from students related to predicting are shown:

*IP2*  L 54-56 “…todo el mundo decía no es que va a pasar esto y otros decían no va a pasar esto, y ya cuando empezaban a leer uno ya se iba dando cuenta quien tenía la razón o quien no, o podía ser algo muy diferente”

The level of engagement in students with the reading activity increased when they made their own predictions before and during the text. Another student’s perception about predicting is presented next.

*I 2*  L 58-60 “claro, o sea, se vuelve una actividad interesante porque una lectura simple es aburrida, muchos se quedan dormidos. En cambio cuando uno empieza a imaginarse, a predecir las cosas…pues si, solamente con leer el título…”

When students had in mind the title of the story as one of the main tools to start predicting and visualizing the situations of the story, they could realize how interesting
the story might be. Once had this student’s opinion, we wanted to support it with the
following excerpt of a reading passage taken from a think-aloud activity.

**AR 1 L 10-16**

“**Teacher:** entonces el título “two sisters and the cat”…… que
creen ustedes q traduce el título de q se trata
**Student 1:** Dos Hermanas y un gato
**Student 2:** Dos Hermanas y su gato
**Teacher:** yeah
Varios estudiantes hablando (es muy confuso)
**Student 1:** que hay dos hermanas que tienen un gato.”

This audio-recording sample, showed once again, how students took advantage of their
prior knowledge because they already knew words like *cat and sister*, so that; it was
easier for students to make their own predictions about the story.

I 3  L 57-61 “claro, lo motiva a uno, por lo que uno se imagina, con el texto,
uno se imagina cualquier cosa, que es lo que va a pasar o esto, entonces ahí le queda a uno como que la duda uf interesante esta lectura por que vamos a ver que va a pasar allí, vamos a ver que le va a pasar al personaje o algo entonces por eso uno le pone mas atención, como que se mete en la película y es súper”.

When students made predictions, their motivation was highly increased because of the
fact that these students felt the necessity of finding out what would really happen in the
story. An example of this motivation generated in these students is shown in the coming
audio-recording entry:

**AR 5  L 43-49**

“**Teacher:** que creen ustedes que va a pasar ahí? Las niñas de atrás, que creen que va a pasar en la historia?
**Student 1:** que lo echan del restaurante
**Teacher:** que lo echan del restaurante?
**Student 1:** sí
**Teacher:** otra
**Student 5:** que lo regañan
**Student 6:** que le regalan la sopa.”
These students felt motivated when they were asked for their predictions of the story by the teacher. A strong reason for the students were motivated with the questions, it is probably they wanted to be right with their predictions along the text.

We as researchers also wrote our comments in the journals about how students used and how they felt when making predictions.

*J 4 L 1-4*  “it has been noticed that when students are asked to imagine the situations that happen in the text, they get more involved and they start to evoke their own interpretations as well as emotions and this has led to a better understanding of the text.

This idea reflected how students constructed meaning by the use of predictions and apart from that understanding, students also got more attentive in the class so that the class became more dynamic.

*J 4 L 53-57*  “pues bueno a ver, como le parece pues que, en el del gato (la lectura) ese ahi decia el titulo entonces uno llegaba y miraba y ahi decia que el cat y todo eso entonces uno mas o menos sabia que era el gato, entonces pues uno decia, no pues esto se trata de un gato y ya viendo que mas tenia que ver el titulo, y mas adelante uno iba leyendo de a poquito y ya se daba cuenta que eso era”

It was confirmed in this interview data how important predictions were in the think-aloud activities because students were not only making use of their prior knowledge but also were motivated to keep reading the text.

6. **Students’ response to reading instruction using think-aloud:** we perceived from the interviews some students’ opinions, feelings and responses towards the implementation of the think aloud.

The next excerpts taken from the interviews, will report the students’ responses towards the think-aloud. The first excerpt illustrates:
I 2  L 12-17 “pues yo creo que... fueron muy buenas, fueron muy bien desarrolladas muy bien pensadas porque era algo que a pesar de que... podían ser lecturas muy sencillas que uno pensaría que son muy para niños pequeños, nosotros lo trabajamos de una manera distinta y a pesar de ser personas de 10 y de 11 lo entendíamos muy bien y nos divertíamos y además de eso también nos enganchaba mas en la lectura”.

This sample showed how the think aloud activity was well received by the student in terms of reading comprehension because first of all, it was a reading activity she had never done before and she had fun, and second of all, she got involved and learned. Two other students pointed out the ensuing comments:

IPT 2  L 9 “La opinión que yo tengo es que fue muy buena por que no era tanto examen, si ve, entonces era mas bien como, como usted explicándonos por medio de guías y así pues yo creo que así es una buena forma de uno aprender mejor las cosas”

I 2  L 51-54 “ahhhhh eso fue mucho más chévere aún, porque pues la verdad, ehh, ninguna otra clase nunca, había tenida la oportunidad, ningún profesor nos había hecho ese tipo de actividad, entonces fue, por lo menos para mi, fue algo nuevo y fue algo muy divertido”.

The search of new learning strategies was important to involve the students who carried out the reading process. Since, these students felt that they were doing something different and dynamic which also facilitated the learning process itself.

I 3  L 14-15 “pues yo opino que fueron excelentes, la integración entre grupo, se siente uno como más relajado”.

The influence of the think aloud was positive according to what the student said, because it led students to work cooperatively and this was something that made students feel good. After seeing students’ opinions toward the think aloud, we will see what the students’ feelings were in regards to this strategy.
In addition to the previous analysis, students felt more comfortable and relaxed when they were developing the reading activity. Besides that, they did not feel fear to speak and participate in front of the class because they took the English language as something accessible. Additionally, some other students commented the following:

*I 3 L 14-16* “...la integración entre grupo, se siente uno como más relajado, no siente miedo a no saber que es lo que están hablando, entonces si se siente mejor y uno se expresa hasta mejor, se entiende más lo que el inglés para uno es tan difícil”.

*II 1 L 59 – 60* “...uno no se sentía presionado por los profesores porque ellos le daban su espacio, le daba el momento a uno para leer...”

*IPT 2 L 49-50* “pues yo me sentía bien por lo que no estaba tan presionado que ha que la nota que bueno, pues por que estaba mas aprendiendo que preocupado por la nota”

It is important to point out how the role of the teacher was only as a guide during the reading process, because he let these students to perform freely the think-aloud activity. Therefore, students were more aware of the process or their performance than in a grade for the English subject.

Until here we have interpreted all the data we found through the use of the methods already known. Hereafter, we are going to compare and discuss our findings with theories taken from experts who talk about the issues related to what we found in this findings section.
Based on our findings, we grouped our discussion in the following categories:

1) Think alouds: its effects in whole group interaction, English language skills, and students’ reading comprehension, 2) Strategic components of the think-aloud process, and 3) Students’ responses to reading instruction using think-alouds.

**Think alouds: its effects in whole group interaction, English language skills, and students’ reading comprehension.**

- **Group Interaction**

  Interaction in the classroom plays an essential role for reading comprehension in students because whole group interactions engage students developing reading tasks more easily. Our findings suggest that the think aloud strategy promoted interaction in the classroom between teacher and students since the teacher led the reading activities while students were constructing meaning from the think-aloud comments. Accordingly, the reading comprehension process became more meaningful to these students. Our findings align with Pressley’s argument cited by McKeown and Gentilucci (1992) that “think-aloud is one of the transactional strategies because it is a joint process of teachers and students working together to construct understandings of text as they interact with it” (p. 1). When students share information, they engage on a negotiating process of understanding in which through this negotiation they can achieve a better understanding from text. Consequently, Consolo (2006) cited Long’s Interaction Hypothesis which argues that “negotiation of meaning in verbal interactions
contributes to the generation of input favorable for second language development”.

(p. 35)

- **Students’ perceptions about English language skills**

  Our findings also suggested that throughout the interaction that the think-aloud promotes, the students perceived that they had a change in their pronunciation, vocabulary and listening skill. A possible explanation to this finding is that in language classrooms interaction is believed to contribute to learners’ language development (Hall and Verplaetse, cited by Consolo2006).

- **Reading comprehension**

  Another main contribution of teacher-students interactions in the reading comprehension process is the function of the teacher in regards to the students’ reading comprehension development. Our data shows how the role of the teacher is crucial when students are performing a reading activity, since the teacher knows where exactly he can make elicitation as well as pauses in the story in order to ask students to use the reading strategies. What students did at the moment of reporting their thoughts is what is known as verbal protocols. Gillam, Fargo & Robertson (2009) cited several authors that have declared that during a think aloud task, examiners periodically asked participants to report their thoughts (verbal protocols) these verbal protocols typically consist of a series of factual comments (e.g., paraphrases, repetitions) or inferences (e.g., causal predictive). That is why we insist that the role of the teacher is vital to help learners develop some language aspects like pronunciation and vocabulary because when students are verbalizing their thoughts there should be an immediate feedback provided by the teacher in the reading activities. Hall & Verplaetse cited by Consolo (2006) claimed that when students and teachers interact with each other they are able to
create activities that shape the target language as well as the outcomes of each student development (p. 34). Similarly, Vigotsky cited by Zuñiga (2005) refers to scaffolding as a support mechanism that teachers and parents use to assist students. Moreover, he says as well that children can accomplish more difficult tasks with collaboration from adults than by their own. In this case adults is referred to us, as teachers.

We reported in our findings that through the use of the think-aloud strategy students improved their reading comprehension process. As students think aloud, they learn how to learn, and they develop into reflective, metacognitive, an invaluable step in helping students understand that learning requires effort and often is difficult (Tinzmann in teacher vision, 2009).

**Strategic components of the think-aloud process**

Dealing with the incorporation of strategies into the classroom we noticed that three strategies we implemented (i.e. visualizing, predicting and prior knowledge) fostered reading comprehension in the students who attended the reading activities. We will discuss each component in the following sections.

- **Visualizing**

In our study we found that when a narrative text has images, these illustrations might help students to visualize what is occurring inside the story. Harvey and Goudvis (2000) state that “visualizing personalizes reading, keeps us engaged, and often prevents us from abandoning a book”. (p. 132) We also found when students start to have ideas about the story in their minds by using mental images, they can express themselves more easily at the time of drawing conclusions about what they are reading. Our
observation aligns with what Keene & Zimmerman stipulate in Florida On line Reading – Professional Development’s article (2007) that “visualizing allows students the ability to become more engaged in their reading and use their imagery to draw conclusions, create interpretations of the text, and recall details and elements from the text”. (p. 1) We also found that the representation of images in students’ minds led them to have not only a better understanding of the text but also to be more involved with the reading task. In the same way, Zabala (2004) also found that his students also used their imagination with the purpose of comprehending the English texts. In our findings it was also highlighted that when teachers encourage students to use their imagination as a comprehension tool, students move from literal decoding towards a conscious mental process in which they provide their own perspectives and meanings to the text based on their background knowledge to make their visualizations of the story. Likewise helping our students gain visualization skills is an important way to foster greater comprehension when reading (Keene & Zimmerman in Florida On line Reading – Professional Development’s article). Additionally, Rog (2001) states that “when students visualize what they read, they are making meaning of text by combining the words of the page with what they already know to create a picture in their minds”. (p. 117) Adding up, Zabala’s findings concluded saying that imagination, prediction and translation were the most important mechanisms used by the students to comprehend the reading text.

**Predicting & Evoking Prior Knowledge**

Another important issue in our study is how the use of predictions played a fundamental role in the development of the reading activities by the students. When students make predictions, their motivation is highly increased because of the fact that
these students feel the necessity of finding out what really happens in the story. In regards to predicting, Honig, Diamond & Glutohn are cited by Kelley & Clausen-Grace (2007) to stipulate that “when readers predict they must engage with the text. They use their prior knowledge and the text to set up expectations of what will happen or what information the text will contain.” (p. 79).

Another component of predicting we noticed is how the level of engagement in students increases when they make their own predictions before and during reading. This engagement produced by the predicting strategy, led students to have an understanding of text. Turner (2000) cites Baker, Dreher, & Guthrie’s work, to report that “engaged readers use cognitive strategies for integrating information, and communicating and representing their understanding”. (p. 7)

One of the main tools to start predicting and visualizing the situations of the story is when students have in mind the title of the story, with the title; they can realize how interesting the story might be. According to Rog (2001), “predicting involves making educated guesses about what will come next in the story. It is, in a way, a form of inferring as readers must apply what they read in the text to what they already known in order to formulate their predictions”. (p. 117). It means that the title of the story becomes an important part for making predictions, since it gives the reader some clues about what the story will be about. Additionally, the title is a good element for making predictions because it tends to indicate the subject or the theme. (Dutta 1994)

Another important element used by the students at the moment of making their own predictions about the story is their prior knowledge. Robb refers to Gillet and Temple (1990) to point out that, “predictions are the connecting links between prior knowledge
and new information in the book”. (p. 120). For this reason, it is very important to make predictions in the think-aloud activities because students are not only making use of their prior knowledge but also are motivated to keep reading the text. Students can achieve a partial comprehension of the text as well by the use of prior knowledge. This report is corroborated with Park’s thought taken as reference by Toprak and Öncel (2007), who stipulates that “readers use their background knowledge to interpret texts. We also remark that the function of prior knowledge is a crucial element to understand what is being read”. (p. 47). Similarly, Zuñiga (2005) takes as reference the schema theory to declare that, communication and comprehension are so prior-knowledge dependent, children whose knowledge of a variety of topics is limited have difficulty comprehending much of what they read and hardship communicating in writing about many topics. Our data also suggest that students take advantage of their prior knowledge in order to make their own predictions about the story. Zuñiga (2005) made another important point about prior knowledge saying that the more expansively interconnected readers’ background knowledge is, the more rapidly and easily each piece of information can be accessed from memory. However, if students lack of prior knowledge about specific topics, what teachers can do before starting with the reading session is to make a pre-reading activity with the purpose of giving students ideas about what the reading is going to be about.

**Students’ responses to reading instruction using think-alouds**

Students’ responses were influenced by the teacher instruction and the implementation of the think-aloud strategy in the reading activities. Findings from our study in regards to reading instruction assert that the role of the teacher is significant
and effective. These revealed how students’ performances were not affected negatively but positively since our role during the reading process was not only to assist students but also to give instructions when it was necessary, because we let students perform on their own the think-aloud activities. Hence, it is valuable to cite what Kelly and Verplaetse (2000) stipulated, they say that “teachers mediate both the quality and the quantity of opportunities the students will have to participate in and learn from the activities”. (p. 10) In other words, the help provided by the teacher scaffolding students’ performances plays a very important role.

Our findings also reported how the think aloud activity is well received by students in terms of reading comprehension because it is a reading activity novelty for them, in which they can get involved, have fun and learn through it in a comfortable and intellectually changeling environment. Oster (2001) suggests that students become comfortable with the think-aloud strategy as they practice it, they valued peer sharing and class discussion based on their think aloud comments. Additionally, Oster comments that the level of student interest and participation increased, and their understanding of literature improved when the think aloud was the basis of his teaching (p. 69). Oster’s conclusion supports other findings such as: students feel more comfortable and relaxed when they are developing think-alouds. Besides that, they do not feel fear to speak and participate in front of the class when thinking aloud.
INSTRUCTIONAL AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Our study has two types of implications such as: instructional which refers to pedagogical issues found in our study, and research implications which refers to some other issues that can be explored from our study.

- **Instructional implications:** after conducting the research, we can say that think-aloud is a reading strategy which can help to improve classroom environment in terms of interaction, engagement, English language development and reading comprehension. For these reasons we deem English teachers should implement this reading strategy because it is something that enriches the learning process in the classroom and apart from that, it is something new for our educational system.

- **Research implications:** after carrying out this investigation, we deem that some other aspects should be taken into account when implementing the think aloud strategy. We believe that aspects such as critical thinking should be included in a further research because when students are reporting their thought they could do it with a critical perspective so the implementation of other types of reading apart from short stories, such as newspaper articles, magazines or some other authentic texts may foster students to read and be critical as well.

We also believe that another aspect to be investigated is the implementation of the think aloud strategy but in the Spanish class, because as we already know, think aloud enriches the learning process, thus, students may take advantage of the think aloud but in their mother tongue.
CONCLUSIONS

After conducting this study, we conclude that during the reading process carried out with tenth graders, the impact generated by the think-aloud strategy in these students is basically reflected on four aspects.

First of all, the results obtained in this study showed that students increased their engagement in the activities because of the think-aloud strategy. Through the use this strategy they could interact and construct meaning from the texts at once when they developed the reading tasks. Second, it is important to highlight that the role of the teacher as a guide was crucial in think-alouds because he could assist and foster students to use reading strategies such as predicting, visualizing, and prior knowledge in order to comprehend the reading texts. Being the teacher’s role only as a guide, students then are the main protagonists of the reading process. Third, another positive impact of the think-aloud strategy, is that students constantly mentioned that they had an enhancement in some specific aspects of English language such as: pronunciation, vocabulary, and listening skill.

Finally, the most important conclusion that we can draw form this study is that through think-alouds students had a positive change in terms of English reading comprehension. This change was reflected mainly on two ways: firstly, if we make a comparison between the diagnostic and the final test, it can be evidenced how students in the final test obtained better results than in the diagnostic test after the implementation of the think aloud. Hence, those results led us to conclude that by means of the think-aloud strategy students were positive impacted in their reading comprehension. Secondly, in our findings, we found that students in their interviews
mentioned constantly that through the use of the think-aloud strategy they not only understood the reading texts better but also felt more comfortable and enthusiastic when implementing this strategy. Thus, we can state that students’ responses towards the think aloud were positive in terms of reading comprehension.

After the implementation of the activities, after what we observed inside the classroom as teachers and researchers, after analyzing the results of the tests, and the students responses towards the think aloud activity, we can say that reading comprehension in tenth graders can be supported through the incorporation of the think-aloud strategy.
REFERENCES


Think-aloud for reading comprehension in tenth graders


A special Christmas present

David wants to buy a Christmas present for a very special person, his mother. David's father gives him $5.00 a week pocket money and David puts $2.00 a week into his bank account. After three months David takes $20.00 out of his bank account and goes to the shopping mall. He looks and looks for a perfect gift. Suddenly he sees a beautiful brooch in the shape of his favourite pet.

He says to himself "Mother loves jewelry, and the brooch costs only $17.00." He buys the brooch and takes it home. He wraps the present in Christmas paper and places it under the tree. He is very excited and he is looking forward to Christmas morning to see the joy on his mother's face.

But when his mother opens the present she screams with terror because she sees a spider.

What does David want to buy his mother?
A a special birthday present
B a Christmas present
C a spider ring

Who does David get his money from?
A his pet
B his mother
C his father

How much money does David have in the bank?
A $20.00
B $5.00
C $17.00

What does David buy his mother?
A a ring
B a brooch
C a spider

What does David do with the present when he takes it home?
A he gives it to his mother
B he wraps it in Christmas paper
C he is very excited

Why does David's mother scream?
A because the present is beautiful
B because she doesn't like Christmas presents
C because she thinks she sees a real spider

Why does David buy a spider brooch?
A spiders are his favourite pet
B he loves Christmas
C to scare his mother

Where does David put the present on Christmas Eve?
A under his pillow
B under a spider
C under the Christmas tree
Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Smith are sisters. Mrs. Wilson lives in a house in Duncan and Mrs. Smith lives in a condominium in Victoria. One day Mrs. Wilson visited her sister. When her sister answered the door, Mrs. Wilson saw tears in her eyes. "What's the matter?" she asked. Mrs. Smith said "My cat Sammy died last night and I have no place to bury him."

She began to cry again. Mrs. Wilson was very sad because she knew her sister loved the cat very much. Suddenly Mrs. Wilson said "I can bury your cat in my garden in Duncan and you can come and visit him sometimes." Mrs. Smith stopped crying and the two sisters had tea together and a nice visit.

It was now five o'clock and Mrs. Wilson said it was time for her to go home. She put on her hat, coat and gloves and Mrs. Smith put the dead Sammy into a shopping bag. Mrs. Wilson took the shopping bag and walked to the bus stop. She waited a long time for the bus so she bought a newspaper. When the bus arrived, she got on the bus, sat down and put the shopping bag on the floor beside her feet. She then began to read the newspaper. When the bus arrived at her bus stop, she got off the bus and walked for about two minutes. Suddenly she remembered she had left the shopping bag on the bus.

[Story by Laurie Buchanan]
Annex 3: reading modelled by the teacher

'I made a mistake!'

It's a horrible end to the day.

Teacher Lina Maria from Pereira is cycling home from work. Suddenly a thief on a motorbike pulls alongside her. He grabs her handbag and speeds away.

Lina is very upset. Inside the bag is a mobile phone and around ($600 US). It's the money to pay his rent.

When she tries calling her phone there's no answer. So Lina sends a text message.

‘Keep the money if you really need it,’ she writes, ‘but please return the other things to me. We all make mistakes.’

That message receives no reply. Nor do the other 20 messages Lina sends to her phone. ‘I won’t see my bag again,’ she thinks sadly.

Three days later she has a happy surprise. She comes home to find her handbag outside the front door of her home. Everything is in it. And there's a letter inside:

‘Dear Pan: I'm sorry,’ the thief has written. ‘I made a mistake. Please forgive me.

You are so tolerant even though I stole from you. I want to change. I want to become a good person.’
Chavez and the Smell of Soup

One day, a poor man, who had only one piece of bread to eat, was walking past a restaurant. There was a large pot of soup on the table. The poor man held his bread over the soup, so the steam from the soup went into the bread, and gave it a good smell. Then he ate the bread.

The restaurant owner was very angry at this, and he asked the man for money, in exchange for the steam from the soup. The poor man had no money, so the restaurant owner took him to Chavez, who was a judge at that time. Chavez thought about the case for a little while.

Then he took some money from his pocket. He held the coins next to the restaurant owner's ear, and shook them, so that they made a jingling noise.

"What was that?" asked the restaurant owner.

"That was payment for you," answered Chavez.

"What do you mean? That was just the sound of coins!" protested the restaurant owner.
"The sound of the coins is payment for the smell of the soup," answered Chavez. "Now go back to your restaurant."

**ANSWER THE QUESTIONS**

Mark with an X the correct answer:

1. **What food did the poor man have?**
   - soup
   - bread
   - nothing

2. **What kind of food did he see in the restaurant?**
   - bread
   - meat
   - soup

3. **Why did he hold the bread over the soup?**
   - So the steam from the soup would go into the bread.
   - So he could warm his hand.
   - So the restaurant owner would get angry.

4. **Why did the restaurant owner take the poor man to Chavez?**
   - Because Chavez was a judge.

5. **What did Chavez do with the coins?**
   - He gave them to the restaurant owner.
   - He made a noise with them.
   - He gave them to the poor man.

6. **What was the payment for the smell of the soup?**
   - the sound of money
   - a few coins
   - there was no payment
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