Reading comprehension strategies within an EAP short-course.

Derly Caterine Yaima Ardila

Licenciatura en Lengua Inglesa
Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira
Wednesday, November 16th, 2011
Reading comprehension strategies within an EAP short-course.

1. Statement of the problem and purpose
2. Relevant definitions and current findings
3. Type of study and research questions
4. Participants and context
5. Instructional design
6. Data collection methods
7. Data Analysis
8. Findings
9. Discussion
10. Implications
11. Limitations
12. Conclusion
1. Statement of the problem.

2. Gómez & Montealegre (1999) foreign languages as resources.

3. DANE (2008)

4. Grabe & Stoller (2001) lack of motivation to read. Reading plays a limited role


1. Updated information
Cuadro 44
Colombia cabeceras municipales. Total de personas de 12 años y más que afirmaron saber leer y escribir y leyeron libros en los últimos 12 meses por sexo según motivos de lectura 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Razones de lectura de libros</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Proporción %</th>
<th>Hombre</th>
<th>Proporción %</th>
<th>Mujer</th>
<th>Proporción %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.v.e.%</td>
<td>0,83</td>
<td>0,59</td>
<td>1,66</td>
<td>1,64</td>
<td>1,37</td>
<td>1,17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requerimientos del trabajo</td>
<td>1.136.822</td>
<td>8,72</td>
<td>599.958</td>
<td>4,60</td>
<td>536.864</td>
<td>4,12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.v.e.%</td>
<td>3,72</td>
<td>3,66</td>
<td>5,34</td>
<td>5,35</td>
<td>5,53</td>
<td>5,44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exigencia del estudio</td>
<td>4.377.312</td>
<td>33,59</td>
<td>2.016.796</td>
<td>15,48</td>
<td>2.360.517</td>
<td>18,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.v.e.%</td>
<td>1,54</td>
<td>1,47</td>
<td>2,52</td>
<td>2,53</td>
<td>2,31</td>
<td>2,22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fuente: DANE – Encuesta de Consumo Cultural 2008

Nota: para el cálculo de las proporciones el denominador es el total de personas de 12 años y más que saben leer y escribir y que leyeron libros en los últimos 12 meses (13,032,408)
1. Purpose.

The aim of the current research study was to implement reading comprehension strategies instruction within an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) short-course, by also taking into account the use of think aloud methods and collaborative learning as the resources college students in Pereira, Colombia need to focus on in order to succeed in their academic tasks requiring them to read and comprehend relevant, updated and widely known information written in a foreign language, English involving their academic field.
2. Relevant definitions


- **TESOL**
  (Teaching English to Speakers of other Languages)

- **ESP**
  (English for Specific Purposes)

- **EOP**
  (English for Occupational Purposes)

- **EAP**
  (English for Academic Purposes)
3. Theoretical ideas.

- **General English courses**

- **Think aloud method**

- **Collaborative learning**
  - Smith & MacGregor (1992)

- **Cognitive strategy**

- **The metacognitive strategy**
  - Greeno et al. (1996), eval/ monitoring.

- **Comprehension strategy**
General comprehension strategy
- Block (1986), follow-up.

Top down Strategy
- Reader-centered strategies, text structure.

Bottom-up strategy
- Block (1986), meaning.

Scanning
- Grabe (2002).

False cognate
- Richards et al. (1985).

Predicting
- Dutta (1994).
Rereading

Schematic knowledge:
- Aebersold & Field (1997), previous know.

Summarizing

Note taking
3. Type of study
   Qualitative
   Based on Grounded theory & the constant comparative method described by Glaser & Strauss, (1967)

   Description
   Interpretation
3. Research questions

1. Which are the reading comprehension strategies in which the participants of this research study relied on the most when reading in their mother tongue (Spanish)?

2. Which are the reading comprehension strategies used by the participants of this research study when reading in their foreign language (English) after receiving the instruction from the EAP short-course they attended to?

3. What does the use of reading comprehension strategies in EAP texts evidence in the participants’ comprehension?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Population</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Upton (1997)</strong></td>
<td>ESL subjects focused more on local linguistic aspects of a text as they read; whereas academic subjects focused more equally on both, the general comprehension-gathering/monitoring strategies as well as the local, linguistic oriented strategies. ESL subjects relied heavily on their first language to help them think through, and wrestle with the L2 text; whereas the academic subjects felt much more comfortable with thinking about the texts and making sense of them by using the language the text presented, readers’ L2. RCS and the relative use of the L1 and L2 in the comprehension process varied between individuals but fell within predictable domains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 native speakers of Japanese. 1: 6 subjects taking intermediate ESL classes at the Minnesota English Center at the University of Minnesota =“ESL students”. 2: 5 subjects no longer taking ESL classes, enrolled in academic programs at the same university = “academic students”.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Author and Population</td>
<td>Finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Proctor and Mo (2009)**  
30 fourth graders from a school in Southern California who were Spanish-English bilingual and monolingual students. | Bilingual students outperformed their monolingual counterparts on the ratio of correct items that were represented by **cognates** noted with the test the participants took. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Population</th>
<th>Finding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Seng & Hashim (2006)**  
4 undergraduate Malay females from the University of Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), 2nd semester of their bachelor in education, and who spoke Bahasa Malasya as their L1. | L1 was used mostly for translations and management of unknown words, or to substitute the unfamiliar ones with possible equivalents from the participants' L1 to L2. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Population</th>
<th>Finding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Upton & Thompson (2001)**  
20 students, who were Chinese and Japanese at three levels of language proficiency studying in the United States | L2 readers have access to their L1 as they read, and many readers use it as a strategy to help them comprehend such L2 texts, or for helping them to retain and identify the main features of the text content. |
5. Context

“Universidad del Café”
- Free English language courses:
  - Basic-A, course 1, 2 and 3.
  - Pre-intermediate-B, course 4, 5 and 6.
  - Intermediate –C, course 7, 8, 9.
  - Upper- intermediate-D course 10, 11 and 12.
  - Young advanced-E., course 13, 14, 15 and 16.

Participants
- 3 women and 2 men (20 to 25 years old).
- “Ciencias Deportivas program”/3rd semester.
- “Fisiologia Humanistica”/ 3 Pp were taking for their 2nd time their subject.
- Magazine entitled “Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise”.
- L1: Spanish.
- L2/F.lge: English.
- English courses: Basic-A and Pre-intermediate-B.
6. Instructional design

Reading comprehension strategies like: rereading, true and false cognates recognition, predicting, and summarizing, think aloud methods and collaborative learning, evidenced in the outcomes the participants presented in the findings.

Six classes’ instruction of an 1.5 hour / week. In total, 9 hours of reading comprehension strategies instruction developed in a foreign language (English) within an EAP short-course. The material used for the classes’ instruction conducted was taken from the official monthly journal “Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise” published by the American College of Sports Medicine.

Classes’ instruction included the four ways in which an EAP course can be specific as Strevens (1977) suggested.
1. Skills in order to achieve a purpose
2. Foreign language restriction
3. Relevant topics
4. Teaching and learner communicative needs
7. Data collection methods

1RQ
Weir (1980)
courses, diagnosis
or needs' analysis

2RQ
Classes' instructions & observations
Mack et al. (2005)
perspectives and context

3RQ
Semi-structured interview
Merriam (1998)
respondents evidence their perceptions
8. Data analysis: Grounded theory, comparative method

1. Observation, writing and reading of the first analytical notes.
2. Rereading in order to create the emerging patterns by considering the new information closely related to the same piece of data.
4. Numbered codes from 1 to 6.
5. Grouping and triangulation among data collection methods and results.
6. Designing graphic for some data.
9. Findings

a. Participants’ use of reading comprehension strategies in order to understand academic texts written in a foreign language (English).

b. The role of participants’ previous knowledge when reading in a foreign language related to their academic field.

c. Participants’ sense making evidenced throughout the use of think out loud method while reading academically in a foreign language and working collaboratively.

d. Participants’ effect after finishing the reading comprehension strategies’ instruction.
a. Participants’ use of reading comprehension strategies in order to understand academic texts written in a foreign language (English):

- key words’ recognition and familiar concepts.
- Participants awareness of reading comprehension strategies use.
4/ ¿Conoce de la existencia de estrategias de comprensión de lectura?

SI [ ]  NO [X]

¿Cuáles?

5/ ¿Qué concepto tiene de estrategia de comprensión de lectura?

R: Formas claras y cuidada de interpretar

4/ ¿Conoce de la existencia de estrategias de comprensión de lectura?

SI [ ]  NO [X]

¿Cuáles?

5/ ¿Qué concepto tiene de estrategia de comprensión de lectura?

Son grupos que establecen para duración determinada tiempo/medios
Actividades que ofrecen para mejorar la comprensión de lo

6/ ¿Es Ud. Consciente del uso de estrategias de comprensión de lectura mientras lee en su
lengua nativa (Español)?

SI [ ]  NO [X]

7/ ¿Cuál es la estrategia de comprensión lectora que más usa mientras lee en Español?

hacer mapas conceptuales  sacar palabras clave e
un resumen

7/ ¿Cuál es la estrategia de comprensión lectora que más usa mientras lee en Español?

Leer luego sacar resumen de lo más importante
a.1 Participants recognition of true cognates from a foreign language text linked to their academic field.

The teacher asked the participant Y to define a word from her text, after reading it individually; since this was during the first class instruction the article used was “Scientists identify key protein from mitochondria in energy regulation”, which involved the word “Gen”. Afterwards, the participant realizes about the name of the strategy she used unconsciously.

**Teacher:** does anyone know what gene means? What’s the meaning of gene?

**VY1:** “Gen” (in Spanish).

Developing the second class instruction, the teacher asked the participants about the process dealing with “cardiorespiratory” fitness, after finishing their reading in small groups.

**Teacher:** What do you think cardiorespiratory fitness is in the text?

**FN2:** “ehh...“cardiorrespiratorio” because it is similar like in Spanish “ejercicio cardiovascular” creo!”

**Chacón B.R (2006)** learners may focus on the language similarities between the readers’ mother tongue and foreign language.
a.2 Participants’ misconceptions of words (False cognate’s recognition).

After carrying out the fifth class instruction, the teacher asked for doubts, since in this case the teachers’ aim was to revise some concepts involving cognate’s recognition. As a result one of the participants provided the following excerpt:

Teacher: ¿Algo que no hayan entendido?
FY5: “¡Membership!”
Teacher: ¿Qué piensas cuando ves esa palabra?
FY5: “Membrete?”

Richards et al. (1985) the main difficulty of finding a word presented in two different languages that has similar features, involves two words which differ in meaning.

a.3 Participants re-reading to recapitulate information in either language, Spanish or English, (L1 and L2).

The following excerpt shows the result from what the participant N understood after rereading the text proposed for the first class instruction, answering the comprehension question asked by the teacher.

FN1: “It’s telling something about a searching, who about that say that ehh... the obesity... about a relation with a protein specific with the mitochondria”.

Stine-Morrow et al. (2004) and Callender & McDaniel (2009) agree on the fact that individuals reread to gain an enhanced comprehension of a text.

John (1988) agrees with Rumelhart (1977) on the fact that readers comprehend, and eventually summarize better when they have been exposed to texts which are similar to the ones they are asked to read for the task demanded.
Moreover, in the following data driven from the third class instruction, participant G was asked to reread a chunk of text individually, in order to review it and summarize it by sharing his understanding.

**Teacher:** what did you understand from the reading?

**VG3:** “Pues yo entendí que la obesidad es muy alarmante… y que los niveles de cáncer han bajado en los hombres, pero en las mujeres no”.

while asking for the participants' understanding of the text, they were rereading individually for about six minutes during the last class instruction, one of the students provided the following sample:

**FE6:** “Teacher ¿lo que haya entendido? (Laughs) lo que trata es de algo sobre la menstruación y de las muchachas con las que hicieron el estudio del laboratorio”.

**Upton (1997)** less proficient ESL readers rely to a great extent on their L1 to help them determine word and text meaning, and check their comprehension; whereas, more proficient second language readers revert less frequently to their L1 as a reading comprehension strategy.
a.4 Participants’ resources towards a foreign language text linked to their academic field (unexpected finding).

The participants were asked to read individually an English article connected to their academic field for the first class instruction; therefore, one of the student’s resources to help her understand, was note taking, as described in the field notes the observer wrote during the class.

FNA1: she looked interested during the class because she was taking notes on her notebook and reading her material smoothly with a very low tone of voice, whereas the rest of the students were chatting in Spanish.

while developing the fourth and fifth class instruction, the participants were reading in pairs and one of them provided to the observer the following data:

F4: The student G was continuously highlighting words on the reading.
F5: Suddenly, the student E is using a notebook to write a sort of translation. Additionally, student Y does not write anything while reading in English; in fact, she highlights some words.

Bauer & Koedinger (2007) note-taking facilitates learning and having notes for later revision or review, facilitates learning.
b. The role of participants’ previous knowledge when reading in a foreign language related to their academic field (unexpected finding).

b.1 Participants recalling previous knowledge involving their academic field.

In the fifth class instruction participants were reading in pairs, and a student showed her interest on sharing the meaning of “BMI”, an acronym she found in the text.

Teacher: Dice algo sobre BMI?
FY5: “índice de masa corporal!”

On the other hand, during the second class instruction, the teacher asked participant N the following question while reading the text proposed:

Teacher: what do you think is fitness in the reading about?
VN2: “espera un momento…. Ehhh… es que yo lo debo saber…es algo así ehh… como es… si en si pues se refiere a algo así como el ejercicio en cómo influye el ejercicio en las personas con cáncer; pues si como lo he visto yo en mis clases, que las personas que no se ejercitan pueden tener más riesgo de obesidad y cáncer”.

b.2 Participants recalling previous knowledge involving their foreign language previous exposure and its features when reading foreign language texts linked to their academic field.

During the first class instruction participants were reading in small groups, and the teacher wrote on the board the verb “burn” also presented in their texts several times, but the students did not understand such word; thus, they asked the teacher for its meaning. As a result, one participant provided the following real life example including such verb:

VN1: “you can burn a CD”.
Callender & McDaniel (2009) having readers with previous knowledge of the content that will be read, increases the possibilities for them to understand those texts.

Fernandez-Toledo & Salager-Meyer (2009) readers may have previous knowledge for interacting with the information to be processed, known as “data banks”.

Nunan (1999) “Schematic knowledge” in which knowledge and expectations about the world, strongly affect the readers’ ability to understand new information by providing a framework within that new information might fit inside the readers’ mind, making such information meaningful.
c. Participants’ sense making evidenced throughout the use of think aloud method while reading in a foreign language and working collaboratively.

c.1 Participants’ oral production when reading foreign language texts involving their academic field (Code switching, (unexpected finding)).

The following data shows the participant’s N oral production involving his own understanding about the reading he was developing during the second class instruction. Since he was the only student who attended to that class instruction, he worked alone.

Teacher: what did you understand?
VN2: “espera un momento cuando reclutaron se consiguieron, se recogieron los datos que se ocupaban de las poblaciones definidas que eran grupos de trabajo algo así… “they were group people who were women and men in obesity””.

In the following sample, the teacher asked the participants about obesity fitness, and the people involved in the foreign language text, the participants were reading in pairs.

Teacher: how are the people related to Obesity Fitness?
VN2: “Ehh…ratas de laboratorio… ehh… eso la gente que estaban estudiando algo así. “Reduces obesity and minimize the risks of cancer women” Ósea, si me entiende?... los cuáles eran los riesgos de contraer cancer”.

Gunning (1996) the use of think aloud strategy reveals the problems and difficulties that learners may encounter when dealing with a reading comprehension tasks.

Smith & MacGregor (1992) in collaborative learning students work in groups of two or more, equally searching for understanding, solving problems or/and meanings.
c.2 Participants negotiating and recalling meaning of words through the use of images (unexpected finding).

In the first class instruction the participant Y took advantage of the images provided by the teacher while reading individually, as shown below:

**Teacher:** Ok on the stomach, we got something on the stomach…, ok tell me do you understand? You got it?
**VY1:** “Yes, liver”.

Moreover, for the third class instruction in which the teacher provided visual input, one of the students presented the following data, as evidenced by the observer in the field notes.

**FY3:** “Esto será “brachi”? no, es esto!” (Says to herself by pointing to one of the pictures the teacher previously provided).

Additionally, visual input was also provided by the teacher meanwhile students were instructed; nevertheless, the participants did not have a direct question asked by the teacher; thus, one of them provided the following sample:

**FY3:** “¡Eso es un pulmón!” (She continued pointing at the image).

d. Participants’ effect after finishing the reading comprehension strategies’ instruction.
IY: “Yo pienso que son muy importantes porque cuando a uno le entregan esos artículos uno no entiende nada de lo que hay ahí, y muchas veces las palabras son muy desconocidas, y entonces por medio del curso a uno le pueden brindar una asesoría y puede aprender a entender más fácil un artículo, así uno no tenga mucho vocabulario”.

IY: “¡Que deberían usar más el Español cuando estén explicando es que mi cerebro es muy lento!”

IE: “Yo pienso, creo que fue de mucha ayuda ya habíamos visto otros artículos que ustedes habían desglosado muy bien. Por otra parte, los relacionábamos y sacábamos palabras que nos ayudaban en los artículos que nosotros debíamos realizar para el parcial con el profesor. También me parece que es una herramienta de mucha ayuda pues tienen ciertos “tips” para ayudarnos en el desarrollo de nuestro artículo, y relacionar las palabras que no entendemos con las de Español como uso de cognados”.

IG: “La relación que encontramos es que eran artículos de una revista médica, deportiva, entonces esos artículos nos los da el profesor para traducirlos y en las sesiones con ustedes también nos enseñaban también de esa misma revista”.

IG: “La sugerencia sería que no hablaran con grupos de personas que están viendo “fisiología humanística” sino con grupos que están viendo “fisiología pre-humanística” para que ellos se preparen para el otro semestre”.
11. Implications

**a. Research implications:** ESP, EAP, Content-based, expertise degree.

**b. Instructional and pedagogical implications:** Language proficiency, Strevens (1977).

- *The participants*
- *University’s strike*
- *Lack of communication among the researchers’ team*
- *The searching of theory to support this study*
- *Technical problems*

12. Limitations
13. Conclusion

Reading comprehension strategies
EAP
Think aloud method
Collaborative learning
L1 use
Readers’ awareness
Thanks for your attention!

Questions?