

# Improving reading comprehension through direct learning strategies

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Mejora de la comprensión de lectura a través de estrategias de aprendizaje directo



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## ABSTRACT

This article shows the results of a research project concerning to the implementation of some workshops in which direct learning strategies (highlighting, take notes, grouping, associating, semantic mapping and summarizing strategies) were explained and implemented to students of a public urban high school in Ibagué, during the first semester of 2014 to enhance the English reading comprehension.

The population of this study was made up of students from 9th grade; one of the groups was the experimental and the other the control group. Data were collected through a diagnostic test, a series of six workshops with students according to the strategies that were selected and the progress test. Results of this research study showed that once the learning strategies were implemented, the most commonly used by the participants was *the highlighting, takes notes and associating strategies*. This was due to that these strategies not only helped them to understand better what they read, they felt comfortable and willing to participate, but also they changed their attitude towards the reading English process.

**Keywords:** direct learning strategies, reading comprehension process, diagnosis test, progress test and workshops.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo muestra los resultados de un proyecto de investigación relacionado con la aplicación de algunos talleres en los que las estrategias directas de aprendizaje (*resaltar, toma de apuntes, de agrupación, asociación, mapeo semántico y de resumen*) que fueron enseñadas e implementadas con los estudiantes de un colegio oficial de

bachillerato urbano de Ibagué, durante el primer semestre de 2014 para mejorar la comprensión de lectura en inglés.

La población de este estudio estaba conformada por estudiantes de noveno grado; uno de los grupos fue el experimental y el otro el grupo de control. Los datos fueron recolectados a través de: Una prueba diagnóstica, talleres de lectura en concordancia con las estrategias que se habían seleccionado y finalmente una prueba de progreso. Los resultados de esta investigación mostraron que de las estrategias implementadas sobresalieron: resaltar, toma de notas y asociación. Esto se debió a que estas estrategias no solo ayudaron a los estudiantes a entender mejor lo que leían, les hicieron sentir más cómodos y deseosos de participar, sino que además cambiaron la actitud frente al proceso lectura en inglés.

**Palabras Clave:** estrategias directas de aprendizaje, proceso de comprensión de la lectura, prueba diagnóstica, talleres y prueba de progreso.

## Introduction

Reading comprehension has been a hot pedagogical and didactic topic for students, teachers, administrators of education and parents. Although the Ministry of Education has legislated to promote and improve reading at school, it seems that there are a lot to do at this respect. Students and teachers of different subjects struggle looking the best way to approach reading comprehension in the school setting. Moreover, the most practiced and relevant reading practices at school are to report literal information from texts, answer and ask questions, make summaries, explaining linguistic aspects of the language, making translations or practicing pronunciation. (Valencia, 2006; Ortiz, 2009; Rojas, 2013) In contrast, different studies

about reading comprehension and learning strategies have been conducted all around the world (Mikulecky, 2010; Brown, 1999; Oxford, 1990; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990) in an endeavor to improve the learning and teaching process. In this sense, this article showed the results of a study carried out with 9th public school graders to identify, determine and evaluate the effectiveness of using direct learning strategies during their reading comprehension process.

The findings were very relevant because they showed that the idea of teaching learning strategies to improve reading comprehension was effective and helped students to make significant progress on this process, and at the same time this constituted an effort to solve some difficulties particularly in the acquisition of comprehensive skills, following the guidelines of the legislation expressed in The General Law of Education in Article 22nd literal L "To be able to understand and express oneself in a foreign language".

## Theoretical framework

### Learning strategies

To have a clear concept about learning strategies is not an easy task, because there is variety of words used to give definition about them, namely: tools, skills, techniques, capacities or methods. Nonetheless, there have been different authors that provide some intriguing definitions about the strategies. When referring to Learning strategies, the capital letters 'LS' will be used.

Weinstein & Mayer (1987) think LS as: "techniques or devices, which learners use to learn and regulate their learning". Meanwhile, Cohen (1998) affirms that LS are processes that are conscious, he claims:

Strategies can be defined as those processes which are consciously selected by learners and

which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of a... language, through the storage, retention, recall, and application of information about language. (p. 4)

The above definitions provide elements that can help teachers to plan classes and support learning process. For its part, O'Malley & Chamot (1990) assert: "Learning strategies are complex procedure that individuals apply to tasks; consequently they may be represented as procedural knowledge which may be acquired through cognitive, associative and autonomous stages of learning" (p. 52). Furthermore, it is significant to stand out Oxford's definition; which is considered for this study, so that she integrates cognitive and emotional aspects among others. About LS, Oxford (1990) affirms: "LS are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations" (p. 8).

LS are classified in different ways, according to authors' thoughts. For instance: Cohen (1998) estimates that LS could be classified in: retrieval, rehearsal, covers and communicative strategies related to this, he thinks that:

Second language learner strategies encompass both second language learning and second language use strategies. Taken together, they constitute the steps or actions selected by learners either to improve the learning of a second language, the use of it, or both. Language use strategies actually include retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies, and communication strategies. What makes the definition for language learning and language use strategies broad is that it encompasses those actions that are clearly aimed at language learning, as well as those that may well lead to learning but which do not ostensibly have learning as their primary goal. (p. 2)

O'Malley & Chamot (1990:37) consider that: "Metacognitive, involve thinking about learning process, planning for learning, monitoring the learning task, and evaluating how well one has learned". Talking about Cognitive, point out: "Cognitive strategies involve interacting with the material to be learned, manipulating the material mentally or physically, or applying specific techniques to a learning task" (O'Nalley & Chamot, 1990, p.38). The last group of strategies are social an affective, about them O'Malley & Chamot (1990) state: "social and affective involve interacting with another person to assist learning or using affective control to assist a learning task" (p. 39).

Oxford, divides the strategies between direct strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation) and indirect strategies (metacognitive, affective and social), this categorization makes available complete information about some aspects that need to be considered by teachers and learners, if students use the learning strategies they can enrich the learning process.

About direct strategies they are defined as those which are closely related with the language learning, Oxford (1990) declares: "The direct class is composed of memory strategies for remembering and retrieving new information, cognitive strategies for understanding and producing the language, and compensation strategies for using the language despite knowledge gaps" (p. 14).

The direct strategies have different purposes and in this way they are classified into: Memory, Cognitive and Compensation strategies, Oxford (2008) states:

Memory strategies such as grouping or using imaginary, have a highly specific function, help students store and retrieve new information. Cognitive strategies: such as summarizing and reasoning deductively, enable learners

to understand and produce new language by many different means. Compensation strategies, like guessing or using synonyms, allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge. (p. 37)

Bearing in mind that there are a specific subdivision on the direct strategies for this study were considered: Creating mental linkages, students use the knowledge to do something like: grouping, associating, and placing new words into the context. All of them belong to memory strategies. Oxford (2008) defines them as: "**Grouping** involves classifying or reclassifying what is heard or read into meaningful groups, thus reducing the number of unrelated elements" (p. 58). She (2008) also considers that: "**Associating/elaborating** involves associating new language information with familiar concept already in memory. Naturally these associations are likely to strength comprehension, as well as making the material easy to remember" (p. 60).

Continuing with memory strategies, the category Applying Images and Sounds, they are regarding to: using imaginary, *semantic mapping*, using key words, representing sounds in memory. For the purposes of the present study, the semantic mapping is kept in mind. Oxford (2008), declares: "this strategy involves arranging concepts and relationship on paper to create a semantic map, a diagram in which the key concepts are highlighted and are linked with related concepts via arrows or lines" (p. 62).

It is outstanding to mention cognitive strategies, the subdivision Creating Structures were taken into consideration in this study to overlap the information collected and give the results. *Taking notes*, is a strategy that seems to be of easy use for the students to help in the understanding of the text. Oxford (2008), asserts that: "this is a very important strategy for listening and reading, but learners generally are not taught to use it well, if at

all. The focus on taking notes should be on understanding, not writing” (p. 86). Another strategy is *summarizing*, Oxford (2008) states: “summarizing: another strategy that helps learners structure new input and show they understand in summarizing – that is, making a condensed, shorter version of the original passage” (p. 88). And highlighting, which is well recognized among the readers, and defined by Oxford (2008) as follows: “Highlighting: learners sometimes benefit by supplementing notes and summaries with another strategy, highlighting. This strategy emphasizes the major points in a dramatic way, through color” (p. 89).

Picking up LS there are some important studies that consider the advantages and drawbacks to teach strategies to students. Appropriate strategies should help students not only with cognitive aspects but also with motivation, Chamot *et al* (1996) assert: “having access to appropriate strategies should lead students to higher expectations of learning success, a crucial component of motivation. An important aspect in viewing oneself as a successful learner is self –control over strategy use” (p.178). Looking upon the aforementioned, it is relevant to find out learning strategies in order to support students to select the strategies which are more suitable for them; as Oxford & Leaver (1996) affirm: “strategy instruction involves helping students know more about themselves, so they can try out, test, and become expert in using the strategies that help them the most...” (p. 228).

As teachers, it is necessary to guide our students in the learning process providing them tools and strategies that contribute to reach their academic and personal goals.

## Reading comprehension

Reading is an activity in virtue of human beings can get information about different

issues, in some cases it is assumed as a habit through people can learn, enjoy and acquire cultural information, among others aims. In our culture reading plays an important role because people can read body, gestures, graphics, symbols, articles, magazines so different thing which are necessary in the daily life.

In the school is imperative to read books, articles, instructions, texts, cultures and particularly when a second/foreign language is being learned. Reading is not only to decode vowels and consonants, reading imply some stages that allow students have the real meaning of texts. So, it is very indispensable to improve this process in the classroom, because if the students have the tools to understand, they are able to comprehend and use the knowledge in the appropriate way, Mikulecky (2008) think that reading is:

Reading is a conscious and unconscious thinking process. The reader applies many strategies to reconstruct the meaning that the author is assumed to have intended. The reader does this by comparing information in the text to his or her background knowledge and prior experience. (p.1)

It is well known that when students can comprehend and have the ability to interpret the text, mainly in the school, there are more possibilities to learn, and as a result, more chances to get good results than students who have struggles with the reading process. Kim & Anderson (2011), consider that: “reading is essential for successfully completing all college-level courses. In other words, college students who are more proficient readers are most likely to experience more success in their courses. In addition, tests are regularly applied to evaluate academic performance” (p. 30). When students have to answers exercises on external or internal tests they present a lot of difficulties, and their results are very poor and they do not achieve the level required to

pass the exam or are located in the low levels proposed by CEF.

Comprehension could be considered as a skill, so students have to understand what the text is about, and interpret the author's ideas. Brown (2007) identifies comprehension as: "the process of receiving language; listening or reading; input" (p. 379). Reading is a skill classified as a receptive, Zainol (2011), states: "reading as an active, receptive, and decoding language skill is the main source of meaningful input in the process of learning a foreign language". In this vein the importance of working in this skill is so valuable. When the students demonstrate a good level in the reading process, they have not only a very high percentage of acquiring culture knowledge through reading, but also they can recycle information about grammar, structures and broaden vocabulary, moreover there is a possibility to be successful in all subjects during the learning process.

### Type of research methodology

The study was embedded into action research, this kind of research looks for understand a problematic situation in this case the reading comprehension difficulties and try to find out the possible solution of it through the implementation of some direct strategies. Nowadays, this type of research is very suitable especially in education since the teaching and learning of reading demands a carefully and day to day process, so it allows the possibility to reflect on practices as teachers, Richards & Lockhart (1996) consider that:

Research led by a teacher or group of teachers seeking to increase understanding of the processes of teaching and learning. Action research typically involves small-scale research projects in specific contexts of education and is made up of cycle stages such as: planning, action, observation and reflection.

Moreover, action research invites the teachers to reflect on their practices and try to identify a problem and think in a way to figure out the possible answers, Burns (2009) affirms that Action Research (AR): "it is related to the ideas of 'reflective practice' and 'the teacher as researcher'. AR involves taking a self-reflective, critical, and systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts" (p. 2).

The aim of this research was to identify and evaluate the effectiveness of direct learning strategies applied on the students of 9th grade to improve their English reading comprehension process. The research was conducted by the homeroom teacher in the classroom in order to improve and reflect on her practice. The focus is on a quest for knowledge, about how to improve teaching practices and contribute to enhance students' learning process, especially for reading comprehension.

There are different authors that consider the importance of using some stages during the research project, so this project took into consideration the seven phases proposed by Nunan: initiation, preliminary investigation, hypotheses, intervention, evaluation, dissemination and follow up, Nunan (2001:19) asserts:

*Table 1. Stages during the research project.  
Source. Authors.*

Step	Name	Definition
1	Initiation	A problem triggers the idea of action research
2	Preliminary investigation	Base line data are collected to help understand the nature of the problem.

Step	Name	Definition
3	Hypotheses	A hypothesis is formulated after reviewing the initial data
4	Intervention	A number of strategies are devised and applied
5	Evaluation	An assessment is carried out to evaluate the intervention. Some steps may be repeated.
6	Dissemination	A report of the research is published. Ideas emerged from the research are shared.
7	Follow-up	Alternative solutions for the problem are continually investigated

On the other side, as this study is qualitative, it is relevant to allude that in this type of methodology people make conscious about the situation around the world in which they are immerse, and they are moved to take action. Merriam (2009) thinks that: “qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world” (p. 13). Furthermore, qualitative research occurs in natural settings and some instruments to collect data are: interviews, surveys, notes, tape-recordings, and the analysis of them allows to interpret the situation and give some possible solutions to the research questions, Denzin & Lincoln (2005) point out:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. These practices

transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (p. 3)

## Context of research

This study was carried out with students from a public high school located in Ibagué the capital of Tolima, Colombia. Kindergarten to eleventh grade is offered by the school. The average of students is 900 and its strength of Specializing in business is offered by the school.

The participants in this study were students from ninth grade and the homeroom teacher who taught English in 9-1 and 9-2. This project was carried out in two groups: Control group (9.1) and Experimental group (9.2) in order to compare the results.

The research project started with an inventory survey about learning styles, next a diagnostic tests, later some workshops and exercises concerning with the direct learning strategies and at the end of the process a progress test was applied in order to verify if the strategies implemented have had the expected impact .

## Population and sample

Most of the students belong to low socioeconomic status, some of them to medium. About their family environment, it is really varied. Some of the students live

with their parents and others with their grandparents, uncles or aunts.

The sample of this study was made up students from 9.1 the experimental group, meanwhile 9.2 is the control group. With regard to the experimental group, most of the students were between 13 and 15 years old, feature that is very valuable because they are adolescent and were facing some important changes related to their likes, needs, interests and motivation.

Talking in general, this group shows many marked characteristics, about the students' level. They had elementary level, but there were strong differences among them. For instance: Three students who had a high level, understood most of the exercises about English. It can be said that they had a high motivation because they were very active during the class and asked for information in order to improve their level. Some students with an average level, they comprehended some of the instructions and participated in the class, especially when were nominated. On the other hand, there were some students with low level. They neither did the activities nor participate in the class at all and presented serious difficulties with reading comprehension process.

## Research Tools

Some of the instruments to collect the data were: survey, diagnostic test, workshops and progress test.

**Survey:** The survey pretended to get information about learning styles; it was applied at the beginning of the research project to collect information that was analyzed in order to identify the students' learning styles. This information was very useful in order to plan the classes and workshops.

**Diagnostic tests:** (see appendix 1) it was possible to pick up information about students' strength and weaknesses in reading comprehension process in order to plan appropriated type of activities based on direct learning strategies. This test was applied before starting the workshops related to the direct learning strategies. The different exercises were all related to reading comprehension. It is important to mention that it was designed by the homeroom teacher and consisted on five parts, which were distributed in this way: part 1, 3, 4 and 5 were multiple choices, and part 2 was for the students to write the correct word in the space, taking into account a list of words that were given.

**Workshops:** Six workshops about reading comprehension were created, adapted or designed to work with the participants. In each workshop a different learning strategy was applied to students.

The workshop number one *Grouping Strategies* (see appendix 2) had the reading text "The Race into Space is it time to book your ticket?" By Sandra Lim (appendix 2) the exercise was designed with two tasks about grouping strategies, the first one: classifying the words in categories, for instance: verbs, prepositions, nouns and adjectives. The second one: matching opposite adjectives. Once students had done the task, they had to answer some questions related to the reading, and answer True or False exercise. Regarding to workshop number two, *associating strategies* included the reading text "Hurricanes Could Be Caused by Warm Weather". This exercise was distributed among three parts, number one consisted on writing the word that was closely related to Spanish, number two matching some words with its meaning, and number three, checking understanding with multiple choice questions.

The workshop number three *taking notes*, The reading text was "The Hunger Games"

By Brendan Dunne. It was preceded by an exercise in which students had the chance to match some words with its meanings. Later students read the text and took some notes about the ideas that were more significant for them. They wrote them in some bubbles, and finally they faced the checking understanding with three different exercises: multiple choices, true or false and some personal questions related to the reading. In respect to workshop number four *Semantic mapping*, hither students read a text “The Incredible Machine” after the reading they had to write some ideas using a proposed map for this exercise. Once students had written the ideas, they answered some multiple-choice questions.

About the workshop number five *summarizing*, students read “What is Easter”, as soon as they have finished the reading, they had the chance to write the summary using their own words and respect to checking understanding, they answered questions about the reading. Talking about the workshop number six *highlighting*, students had read “Eat your way to better health” here students read and highlight the relevant ideas, and then they answered some questions about the reading.

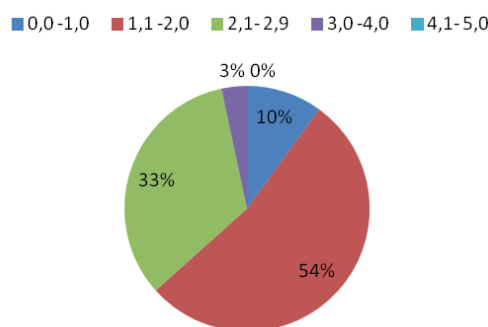
**Progress test:** (see appendix 2) this is a type of test that can be applied at one moment of the course. It checks the specific topic in the syllabus and the teacher can provide it. Lennon (2012) points out: “progress tests are usually written and administered by a class teacher, and look back over recent work, perhaps the work of the last lesson or week”(p. 15).

The progress test was planned taking into consideration some reading comprehension exercises: First and second part, multiple-choice exercise, and in the third part students had to answer some questions and select the best answers from lists of possibilities.

## Results and Discussion

It is important to specify that the school had some parameters to grade students. For instance, from 0 to 2.9 is considered low level, from 3.0 to 4.0 basic levels and from 4.1 to 5.0 high levels. Students are considered approved from 3.0 to 5.0. As the diagnostic test (DT) was analyzed, it showed that for the great majority of the students the results were not satisfactory. Only one student approved the test (3.0 between the ranges from 0 to 5.0.) It was observed that most of the students had hard struggles with the reading comprehension process. This situation was detected through the direct observation, informal talks with the teachers uncharged of those courses and some quizzes in their English classes. Then, the DT bear out the problem situation about comprehension as it can see in the next graphic. The range in the school is lowest from 0, 0 to 1, 0; low from 1, 2 to 2, 0 and from 2, 1 to 2, 9; basic level from 3.0 to 4, 0, and high level from 4, 1 to 5, 0

### DIAGNOSTIC TEST



DIAGNOSTIC TEST	
0,0-1,0	3
1,1-2,0	16
2,1-2,9	10
3,0-4,0	1
4,1-5,0	0

Table 2. Diagnostic test.

Source. Authors.

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Describing the figure and table above, it can say that 54% and 33% of the students got low results; 3% got 3.0 and there were not students placed on ranges between 4.0 and 5.0, then as was told in the previous paragraph this information confirmed that students really presented serious problem about the reading comprehension process. This situation was very worrying, so it was imperative to design and implement a plan to help students to overcome that problematic situation. Then, some workshops were designed using learning strategies that were applied to the group in different moments of the period.

Keeping in mind the aforementioned, the workshops were designed and implemented, according to step 4 and 5 from Nunan (2009). Some abbreviations are used to refer to the strategies: Grouping Strategies (GS), Associating (A) Taking Notes (TN) Semantic Mapping (SM) Summarizing (S) Highlighting (H).

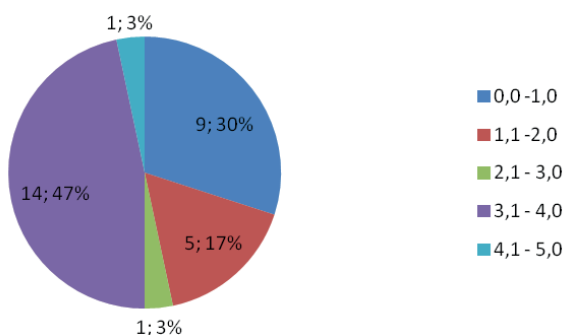
In harmony with the results of the workshops, the learning strategies that were more useful for improving reading comprehension on students were: GS, TN, A and H. It can assert this, because the students got better results on checking understanding about the reading as well as they did the exercises related to the learning strategies too.

On the contrary, SM, S were strategies in which students showed difficulties at the moment of checking understanding because most of the students did not answer the questions rightly. Also, they presented dilemmas with the strategies when they were required to write the summary about the text, it was evident that students had problems to produce sentences and to connect ideas or use vocabulary and structures to organize a paragraph.

It must be noted that the results were systematized once the workshops were applied, reviewed and graded following the school's demands (that was explained in page 10) and accordingly to the law. The data was analyzed using statistics, with the method called "multiple correspondence analyses"(ACM). This method was used to determine the association between the categories of the variables in the study. The analysis was performed in the "XLSTAT" package which is an Office Excel, chosen by easy manipulation of the results in the report, allowing to change and improve the presentation of graphics, fonts and sizes in results, among others, without affecting the results. The procedure was done with the learning styles survey, diagnosis test, workshops, and progress tests.

With regard to the first research question that asked about which from the direct learning strategies grouping or summarizing were more effective for students' reading comprehension, these are the findings and answer: Grouping strategy (GS) included some tasks like classifying the words according to some features that were given in the exercise. It was very useful for students, so they had the chance to reduce a large number of words that were not related with the main topic of the reading. The procedures followed in this part, included the explanation given by the teacher before starting the exercise, the teacher was monitoring the students during the exercise. Once the strategy was developed, the students solved the questions about the reading comprehension, the teacher examined the students' answer and started analyzing the results from the first learning strategy that was implemented in the experimental group; this can be observed in table and figure below:

### Grouping Strategy



Grouping Strategy (GS)	
RANGE GRADE	STUDENT
0,0 -1,0	9
1,1 -2,0	5
2,1 - 3,0	1
3,1 - 4,0	14
4,1 - 5,0	1

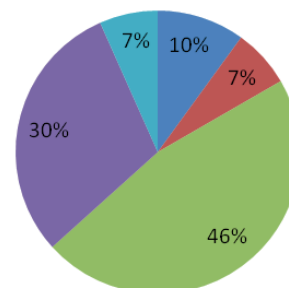
**Table 3.** Grouping Strategy.  
*Source.* Authors.

In agreement with data a large number of students 47% got good results in the reading comprehension process, in contrast with the 30% of them who had the lowest in the exercise. According to the results, they showed that most of the students understood the reading. This confirmed that the use of the GS was beneficial for them. In this vein, one of the purposes at using learning strategies for improving, had been acquaintance and applied by students.

On the other side, the strategy related with summarizing (S) was carried out with the group, as was done with the first strategy. It was observed that this strategy was more difficult for them than the GS. In this part, the students should write their own version of the reading. It was evident that the students presented difficulties not only to write about the text that was read but also with the reading comprehension exercises, in the table 4 and figure 4 the results are shown.

### SUMMARIZING

■ 0,0-1,0 ■ 1,1-2,0 ■ 2,1-2,9 ■ 3,0-4,0 ■ 4,1-5,0



SUMMARIZING	
RANGE/MARK	STUDENTS
0,0 -1,0	3
1,1 -2,0	2
2,1 - 2,9	14
3,0- 4,0	9
4,1 - 5,0	2

**Table 4.** Summarizing.  
*Source.* Authors.

It is observed in the previous figure and table, the 46% of students did not get good grades in reading comprehension exercise with the strategy applied. It was clearly observed when the summaries were reviewed, and was manifested that the students had serious problem at the moment of writing it. Some possible causes could be the lack of vocabulary and structured sentences that affected the coherence and cohesion. The 30% of students got grades between 3.0 and 4.0. The only 7% of students were above the grade 4.0 in the reading comprehension. And 46% of students got results between 2, 1 and 2, 9. }

Comparing the strategies presented before it can figure out that most of the students understand and comprehend the reading through the use of grouping strategy. It can conclude that it is very relevant to guide students and help them about the use of some

strategies, so they can improve their learning process. Then, the teacher's role is very relevant, about it Oxford (2009) asserts: "... others, however, welcome their new functions as facilitator, helper, guide, consultant, adviser, coordinator, ideal person, diagnostician, and co-communicator. New teaching capacities also including identifying students' learning strategies and helping learners to become more independent".

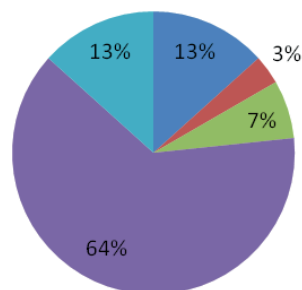
It can mention that the control group was working in some reading exercises and they have not shown a very good result after reading comprehension exercises, this allows saying that the strategies are effective tools to enhance some learning process, in this case the reading comprehension.

Related to the second research question in which was asked about which of the direct learning strategies semantic map or taking notes were more effective for students' reading comprehension, data collected through the workshops was analyzed and the informal notes were taken during the class. The next analysis is based on the results statistically, condensed in tables and figures, which were interpreted by the light of the information getting from the instruments applied.

During application of the strategy taking notes (TN), the students had the opportunity to write what they had understood from the reading exercise. The idea was centered on understanding not on the writing process. Most of the students were reading carefully and writing the ideas that were understandable for them. This situation was observed when the teacher monitored the group during the activity. The figure 5 and table 5 show the results.

### TAKING NOTES

■ 0,0-1,0 ■ 1,1-2,0 ■ 2,1- 2,9 ■ 3,0-4,0 ■ 4,1- 5,0



TAKING NOTES	
RANGE/MARK	STUDENTS
0,0-1,0	4
1,1-2,0	1
2,1-2,9	2
3,0-4,0	19
4,1-5,0	4

Table 5. Taking notes.  
Source. Authors.

Once the strategy about taking notes was explained, the students had to solve the checking understanding exercise that was chosen in advance. The results obtained were very significant for students and their learning process; the 64% got results between 3, 0 and 4, 0 the 13% got grades between 4, 0 and 5, 0. This result was very interesting, so students were able to understand and answer the questions about the reading comprehension.

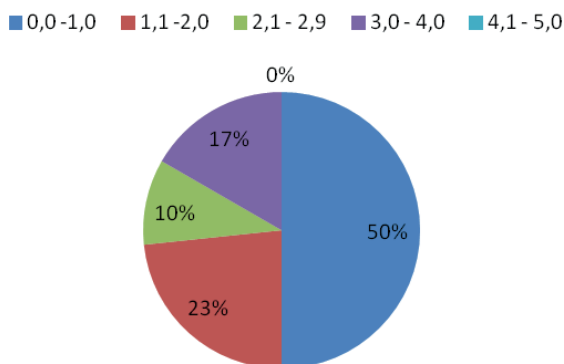
Nonetheless, 3%, 7% and 13% did not get good results; this information was relevant, because the idea with the strategy was that all the students understood, comprehended and got good outcomes in the reading exercise. When students had a clear idea about the content of the reading and they are motivated, they did their best in class, so is very important to encourage students and help them to

understand the activity in order to get better results in class and in learning process too.

Looking upon the strategy semantic mapping (SM), it was explained and students had the chance to read the text, and organized the ideas from the reading, keeping in mind the relationship among them, it was seen that for students the process of writing the most important idea, related to the topic, was very complex. Moreover, during the monitoring moment was detected that in spite of students have understood the general idea, it was hard for them to comprehend the reading thus to write the ideas in a map. It was demanding as well as to apply the strategy (SM) and answer the checking understanding. The results are presented in the figure 6 and table 6.

Once the workshop had finished and the students had answered the questions related to the reading, the results attained were: 50% of the students had problems with the reading comprehension exercise and they could not do any exercises about the reading, so, they were placed in the range 0, 0 -1, 0. 17% of students were ubicated in the range of 1, 1 and 2, 0. This situation was very worried, so it was necessary to reinforce this strategy in order to get students understand it better, and used it to comprehend different texts. Nevertheless, 10% of students got good results. It could assert that one of the problems was the lack of vocabulary, likewise the few opportunities that students have had to practice the productive skill, in this case the writing, because during the strategy they were required to write some ideas from the reading in order to show if they had comprehended the reading.

### SEMANTIC MAP



SEMANTIC MAP	
RANGE/MARK	STUDENTS
0,0 -1,0	15
1,1 -2,0	7
2,1 - 2,9	3
3,0 - 4,0	5
4,1 - 5,0	0

Table 6. Semantic map.  
Source. Authors.

According to the results, it can say that taking notes (TN) was the strategy that students understood better and for that reason, they obtained good results on the test. About semantic mapping (SM) this strategy needs to be strengthened in order student use it for enhancing reading comprehension process.

Regarding to the third research question, which asked about which of the direct learning strategies about highlighting and associating were more effective for students. The strategies were explained and the workshops were applied and analyzed. During this stage, the teacher took some notes to support and complement the information.

As for associating, this strategy allowed students to associate new language with the knowledge they had learnt. In this manner, it was easy for students to comprehend a text. The teacher checked if they have understood the strategy, meanwhile students continued working in the class. Next, the workshop was applied; the students wrote some words that

they associated with Spanish words. It was easy and funny for them to do this part of the workshop. Once they have finished the exercise they carried on with the matching exercise that consisted on linking or joining some concepts with words. Whilst the teacher was monitoring students and provided answers to some questions related to the activity, it was observed that students were working with enthusiasm in the exercise and they were checking the text as many times as they needed in order to do the exercise and answer the questions about reading comprehension. It can affirm that the activity was motivating for them because they understood both the strategy and the reading text, so most of the students gained some right answers and for that reason they had good results in the test. The table and figure show the results attained by students during the implementation of this learning strategy.

As it is noted in the figure 7 and table 7 above, a great percentage of students got good results, 30% were between the range 4,1 and 5,0, it shows that students not only understood the strategy but also gained good level at reading comprehension. The 47% were between the range 3, 0 and 4, 0. It can state that the results showed that students enhanced the reading comprehension process. Nevertheless, the 13% and 10% did not achieve the aim that was proposed with the workshop.

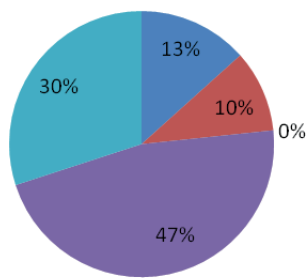
Analyzing the results and reflecting on the teacher’s role, it is meaningful to say that the mission of educators is guiding students and help them to acquire tools that allows them to be successful during the learning process, Wenden (1987) deems: “one mission of the adult educator is ... can be stated positively as helping individuals to develop the attitude that learning is a lifelong process and to acquire the skills of self-directed learning” (p. 9).

In connection with the highlighting (H), this granted students to point out the major aspects from the reading. The strategy was taught and practiced many times by students before reading the text. Once this was done, the students had the opportunity to solve the exercise. At the beginning the students did not have a clear idea about what to do, then the teacher showed them some examples with parts of the texts and the students worked on the exercise, after they had finished the exercise, concerning with the strategy, they answered some questions associated to the text. It is significant to say that the first part was about general questions and the second one contained some multiple choices.

Once the exercises were reviewed, the results obtained were read, tabulated and analyzed. The table 8 and figure 8 show them. It is very essential to mention that the students were concentrated and showed an attitude of commitment in front the reading exercise. Furthermore, it was notorious that

**ASSOCIATING**

■ 0,0-1,0 ■ 1,1-2,0 ■ 2,1- 2,9 ■ 3,0- 4,0 ■ 4,1- 5,0



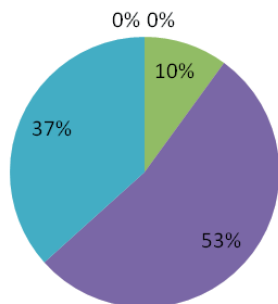
ASSOCIATING	
RANGE/MARK	STUDENTS
0,0-1,0	4
1,1-2,0	3
2,1- 2,9	0
3,0- 4,0	14
4,1- 5,0	9

*Table 7. Associating.  
Source. Authors.*

students were motivated during the different activities, and took a positive attitude that was an important benefit.

### HIGHLIGHTING

■ 0,0 - 1,0 ■ 1,1 - 2,0 ■ 2,1 - 2,9 ■ 3,0 - 4,0 ■ 4,1 - 5,0



HIGHLIGHTING	
RANGE/MARK	STUDENTS
0,0 - 1,0	0
1,1 - 2,0	0
2,1 - 2,9	3
3,0 - 4,0	16
4,1 - 5,0	11

Table 8. Highlighting.  
Source. Authors.

Bearing in mind the results, it could be said that this strategy was very profitable for the students, so that the majority of them had good grades in the reading comprehension process. 53% of students were placed between the range 4, 1 and 5, 0, the 37% were between the range 3, 0 and 4, 0 and the 10% were between 2, 1 and 2, 9 range. It could be noted, that the students were not situated in the inferior ranges.

Comparing the two strategies that were applied, both were favorable for improving the students reading comprehension process, but Highlighting was the strategy that showed that students got the best results in the reading process.

Through the implementation of the different strategies on experimental group and contrasting with the control group, it can claim that the differences were evident, so the experimental group had shown a significant advance in reading process, aspect that is crystal clear on the results related to the exercises. Whilst the control group continued presenting difficulties and did not advance a lot with the comprehension process, then it was imperative to work the strategies with the control group in order to improve the reading comprehension process and learning the language too.

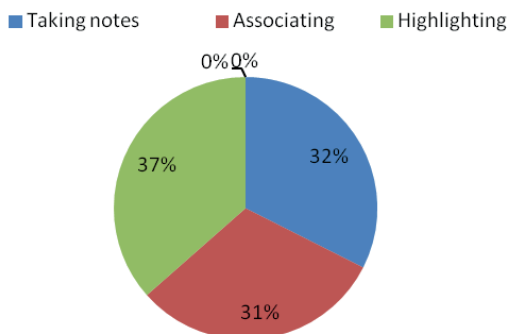
Once all the learning strategies selected and workshops were applied, the time to evaluate the effectiveness of them arrived and the answer of the research question that was posed. In this way and taking into consideration the students' results in obedience to the grades established by the school, it should be noted that the strategies applied had contributed dramatically to improve the reading comprehension process, this appraisal was doubtless based on students' results.

Moreover, it can remark that all the strategies were understood by students and the reading process were developed taking into consideration the importance of improving reading comprehension, the use of strategies as well as better results on the tests. Thus, it can conclude that the strategies in which students have better performance were taking notes (TN), association (A) and highlighting (H) they have better attitude towards reading comprehension process in English now. They participated a lot during the class activities, and specially, they were able to get the meaning from the texts without stopping the reading process.

Once more, analyzing the strategies in which students got better results, the strategy that was the most useful for them because the majority of the students answered the questions

and got good results related to comprehension reading process was highlighting, next taking notes and the last was associating, as it can be checked in the table and figures down.

### LEARNING STRATEGIES



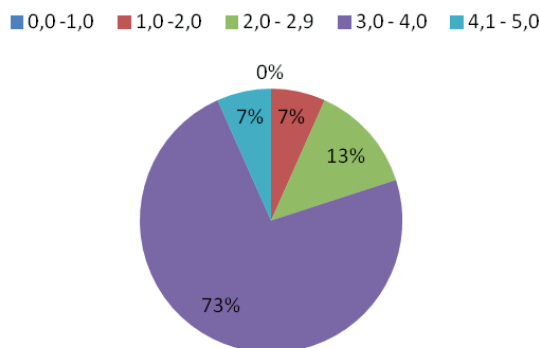
LEARNING STRATEGIES	
Taking notes	24
Associating	23
Highlighting	27

Table 9. Learning strategies.  
Source. Authors.

With respect to these results and paraphrasing Zare (2012), there are some strategies which are beneficial for some students and help them to get better results in learning process; then, it should be taught to students who have difficulties in learning process, in this case this could be taken for reading comprehension process.

After all the strategies were implemented through the workshops, the progress test was applied and the results were very satisfactory, that is to say, most of the students got good results in the test and evidenced a really significant progress about their reading comprehension process, it is showed in the table 10 and figure 10.

### PROGRESS TEST



PROGRESSTEST	
0,0-1,0	0
1,0-2,0	2
2,1-2,9	4
3,0-4,0	22
4,1-5,0	2

Table 10. Progress test.  
Source. Authors.

The results demonstrated that a big percentage of students were over 3.0 that is the grade considered in the school to pass any subject, in this case the test. Therefore it can explain that the 73% obtained grades between 3, 0 and 4, 0, the 7% grades between 4, 1 and 5, 0. Notwithstanding, 13% got results between 2, 1 and 2, 9 and the 7% between 1, 0 and 2, 0. It is considered that the idea was that all the students got grades over 4, 0. Then it is important to continue working with the strategies until the students have the clear idea how to use them and do the better job in the class and get excellent results in the external and internal tests that they have to present.

### Triangulation of the data

Hence at the moment of triangulated the data: diagnostic test, workshops and progress test, it was possible to assert that

the proposal to work on learning strategies through workshops in order to enhance reading comprehension was useful. According to the results from the diagnostic test, it was showed that 97% students got very low results and only 3% passed the test, about reading comprehension; it was corroborated with the previous results on this receptive skill.

Once the different workshops were applied and the diverse strategies were taught, exercised and learnt the students had the chance to develop the workshops and were gained better results in the reading comprehension, as the process was advancing. In this vein the outcomes can be showed: Highlighting, taking notes and associating privileged that students achieved better results on the reading comprehension process, so that the 90% and 77% got good range on them. Meanwhile Grouping, semantic mapping and summarizing showed that students presented

serious difficulties with the comprehension process. As formerly was said, it was valuable to observe the students' attitude during the process, so that they were motivated and confident to acquire vocabulary to comprehend the texts in a better way.

Regarding to the progress test was very important so through it, was the opportunity to check if really students had progressed or not, and most of the students 80% got good results, so in fact to work and teach students how to use some learning strategies were valuable for them. The triangulation technique as Denzin (1970) defines is "a combination of two or more theories, data or research methods in a particular phenomenon". In this sense, three different instruments were taken to see the process of the situation under study. The next figure can show the three elements that were triangulated.

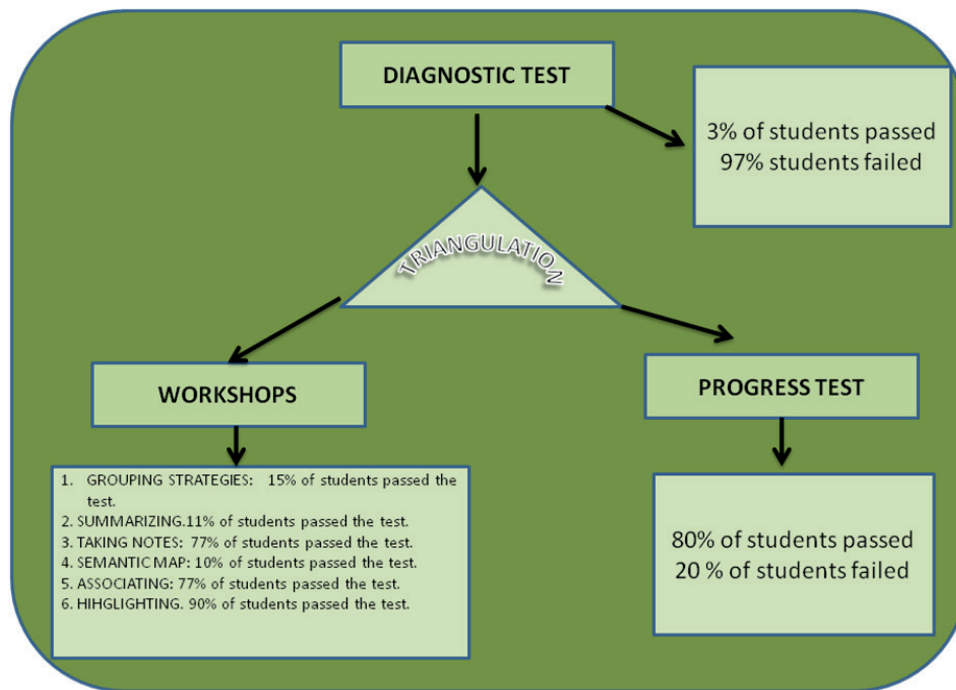


Figure 1. Diagnostic test.  
Source. Authors.

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## Conclusions

It can say that the diagnostic test was very meaningful, so it was a tool to allow identifying the areas in which students were good and the areas in which they needed to work on. After the results it was easy to determine some strategies and design some workshops to teach specific learning direct strategies (summarizing, highlighting, take notes, semantic mapping, grouping strategies, and associating) in order to strengthen the reading comprehension process. In like manner the progress test was very valuable to establish if the learning strategies that were taught, were effective and really helped students to enrich the reading comprehension process, and if the research questions were answered through the stages that were planned. It can assert that the strategies chosen and the workshops were very valuable because the results from the progress test showed that most of the students improve dramatically their reading comprehension process.

It can be noted that to devote time to teach some learning strategies and foster students to use them is very decisive and contribute to give them tools to face reading process and get better results. In accordance with the results and direct observation it is worth mentioning that students had the chance to be more autonomous and discovered which of the strategies were better for them to continue working on them.

The direct strategies (summarizing, highlighting, take notes, semantic mapping, grouping strategies, and associating) chosen for this research project were very essential, so that they allowed students to progress step by step through the different workshops that were implemented. It is significant to assert that the process of selecting strategies was based on students' learning styles, needs as well as the social and cultural aspects. Namely

it is relevant to mention that a key point was to take into consideration the real context, so the learning style inventory was appropriate to identify the students' styles and design and adapt the workshops to involve them in the class and learning process.

Looking upon the results obtained after the process finished, and in order to answer the research question: How does the use of direct learning strategies improve the reading comprehension on students of 9th grade at Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra public school of Ibagué, Tolima?, it could be said that taking notes, highlighting and associating were very effective and useful to help students comprehend reading according to the results gotten and discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore the results attained by the researcher were agreed with the expectation during the research project.

Furthermore, the research hypotheses were answered in this sense the hypothesis number one: Which of the direct learning strategies grouping or summarizing are more effective for students' reading comprehension?, the results showed that grouping was more effective than summarizing, because the students' performance let see that a big percentage of students achieve the aim that was to answer a reading comprehension exercise in a right way. About the research question number two: Which of the direct learning strategies semantic mapping or taking notes are more effective for students' reading comprehension? the outcome presented can define that taking notes was more effective than semantic mapping, so students' performance let see that a big percentage of students achieve the aim that was to answer some questions from a reading comprehension exercise. Regarding to research question number three: Which of the direct learning strategies highlighting or associating are more effective for students' reading comprehension? The findings once the reading comprehension test was graded showed

that highlighting was a little bit more effective than associating so, students' performance let see that a big percentage of students achieve the aim that was to answer some questions from a reading comprehension exercise in both strategies that were implemented. Related to the four research question: Which of the direct learning strategies that have been applied on students from 9th grade are more useful for them? it can be noted that the strategies that were profitable for students, because they had better results after the reading comprehension questions were: highlighting, associating, and taking notes.

This kind of study was rewarding and challenging, and could be the base for future research projects; keeping in mind that today it is mandatory that as educators we research about our practices and the better place to do it is the classroom and the real context, so the idea is to qualify the educational process and especially learning and teaching languages. There are many fields in which teachers can work, to solve problems that could be handling in the classroom and can contribute to qualify education.

In addition, is relevant to mention that the design and adaptation of appropriate materials for students is a determining factor to motivate students to improve the areas that they need to work on. Moreover, it is significant to identify the weaknesses in order to plan activities and classes in which students can learn some tools which are functional for them not only at the learning moment but also for future.

Briefly, it can say that the results obtained in this research project were good and the strategies applied were appropriated, especially because most of the factors were taken into consideration, for instance: students' level, interests and needs as well as the context. It can be noted that the objective with the research project was mainly to improve comprehension level, and progress

test was an interesting evidence of this, the students showed a significant advance it is very crucial to continue working on this issue and teaching other strategies for students to provide them with different tools to face the learning process.

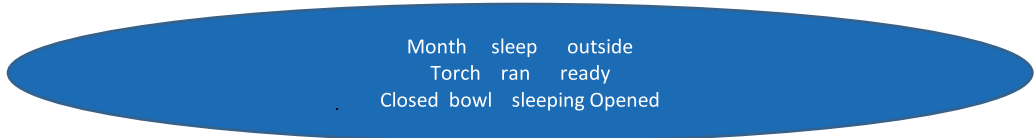
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Taken from: Cambridge Young Learner English. Flyers Reading and writing (p 8-9)

PART 3

In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best fits each space in the texts.  
**For questions 1 to 5, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.**

**CLOCKS**



<https://encrypted-bn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSvnzauTGKJMGmVxL3KaAnhonzNF3qnh9MZbO->

The clock was the first complex mechanical machinery to enter the home, (1) ..... it was too expensive for the (2) ..... person until the 19th century, when (3) ..... production techniques lowered the price. Watches were also developed, but they (4) ..... luxury items until 1868 when the first cheap pocket watch was designed in Switzerland. Watches later became (5) ..... available and Switzerland became the world's leading watch manufacturing centre for the next 100 years.

- |             |            |             |            |
|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| 1 A despite | B although | C otherwise | D average  |
| 2 A average | B medium   | C general   | D common   |
| 3 A vast    | B large    | C wide      | D mass     |
| 4 A lasted  | B endured  | C kept      | D remained |
| 5 A mostly  | B chiefly  | C greatly   | D widely   |

PART FOUR

Taken from: Quick placement test. Oxford(p 8)

Questions 1 to 7

Read the article about a young swimmer. Are sentences 1 to 7 **“Right”** (A) or **“Wrong”** (B)?  
 If there is not enough information to answer Right (A) or Wrong (B), choose **“Doesn’t say”** (C).  
**For questions 1 to 7, mark one letter A, B, or C on your Answer Sheet.**

## ANA JOHNSON



Ana Johnson is a 13-year-old swimmer who lives in Melbourne in Australia. Her dream is to swim for Australia in the next Olympics. She swims in both long and short races and she has already come first in many important competitions.

As well as spending many hours in the pool, Ana also makes time for studying and for friends. "I have lots of friends who swim and we're very close. It's much easier to have friends who are swimmers because they also have to get up early to practice like me and they understand this kind of life. But I'm not so different from other people my age. In my free time I also enjoy going to the movies and parties. There are also some good things about swimming for a club. I travel a lot for competitions and I've made friends with swimmers from other Australian cities and from other parts of the world".

Ana is becoming well known in Australia and she believes it is important to get more young people interested in swimming. "I don't mind talking to journalists and having my photograph taken. But last year I was on TV and that was much more fun".

Example:

0 **Ana's home is in Melbourne.**

A **Right**      B **Wrong**      C **Doesn't say**      Answer

0	A	B	C
	x		

1 **Ana hopes she will become an Olympic swimmer.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

2 **Ana knows that she is better at short races than long ones.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

3 **Ana has won a lot of swimming competitions.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

4 **It is difficult for Ana to make friends with other people who swim.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

5 **Ana likes doing the same things as other teenagers.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

6 **Ana has met people from different countries at swimming competitions.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

7 **Ana prefers speaking to journalists to being on television.**

A Right      B Wrong      C Doesn't say

Taken from: Key English Test for Schools. University Of Cambridge (2009:6)

### PART FIVE

In this section you must read carefully and choose the best answer for questions 1 to 5.

**For questions 1 to 5, mark one letter A, B or C in your Answer Sheet.**

## What Were You Doing?

**Betsy:** I telephoned you yesterday afternoon but you didn't answer? Where were you?

**Brian:** I was in another room when you called. I didn't hear the phone ringing until it was too late.

**Betsy:** What were you working on?

**Brian:** I was photocopying a report that I needed to send to a client. What were you doing when you telephoned?

**Betsy:** I was looking for Tom and couldn't find him. Do you know where he was?

**Brian:** Tom was driving to a meeting.

**Betsy:** Oh, I see. What did you do yesterday?

**Brian:** I met the representatives from Driver's in the morning. In the afternoon, I worked on the report and was just finishing when you telephoned. What did you do?

**Betsy:** Well, at 9 I had a meeting with Ms Anderson. After that, I did some research.

**Brian:** Sounds like a boring day!

**Betsy:** Yes, I don't really like doing research. But it needs to be done.  
**Brian:** I agree with you on that, no research - no business!  
**Betsy:** Tell me about the report. What do you think of it?  
**Brian:** I think the report is a good. Tom believes it's good, too.  
**Betsy:** I know that every report you write is excellent.  
**Brian:** Thank you Betsy, you are always a good friend!

**1.Q: What was Brian doing when Betsy telephoned?**

- a. He was photocopying a report.
- b. He was having a coffee-break.
- c. He was at a meeting

**2. Q: What was Betsy doing when she telephoned Brian?**

- a. She was writing a report.
- b. She was looking for Tom.
- c. She was planning a meeting.

**3. Q: What did Brian do yesterday morning?**

- a. He worked on the report.
- b. He drove to a meeting.
- c. He met representatives from Driver's.

**4. Q: When did Betsy have a meeting with Ms Anderson?**

- a. this afternoon
- b. yesterday afternoon
- c. yesterday morning

**5.Q: Betsy thinks Brian does excellent work.**

- a.true
- b. false
- c. doesn't say

**Taken from:** [http://esl.about.com/od/beginningreadingskills/a/d\\_wered.htm](http://esl.about.com/od/beginningreadingskills/a/d_wered.htm)

**ANSWER SHEET**

**FOR PART ONE**

Mark one letter for each question.

**For example if you think C is the right answer to the question, mark your answer sheet like this**

PART ONE			
<b>1</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>

A	B	C	D

**PART TWO**

**Questions 1-5 write the words on the line**

**0 MONTH**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2 Workshop 1 and Progress test

FOR PART THREE FOUR AND FIVE

Mark one letter for each question.

For example if you think A is the right answer to the question, mark your answer sheet like this

	A	B	C	D

PART THREE				
1	A	B	C	D
2	A	B	C	D
3	A	B	C	D
4	A	B	C	D
5	A	B	C	D

PART FOUR			
1	A	B	C
2	A	B	C
3	A	B	C
4	A	B	C
5	A	B	C
6	A	B	C
7	A	B	C

PART FIVE			
1	A	B	C
2	A	B	C
3	A	B	C
4	A	B	C
5	A	B	C

Appendix 2 Workshop No. 1 Grouping strategies

## WORKSHOP No 1

### The Race into Space

Is it time to book your ticket? Sandra Lim



American millionaire Dennis Tito will always be famous. He was the first tourist in space. "I spent sixty years on Earth and eight days in space and from my viewpoint, it was two separate lives", Tito explained. He loved his time in space. "Being in space and looking back at Earth is one of the most rewarding experiences a human being can have". He says the best part of the experience was speaking to his children on Earth over the radio.

This kind of experience isn't cheap. It cost Tito \$20 million. However, Tito achieved his dream, so he was happy. "For me it was a life dream that began when I didn't have any money," he told the reporters.

On 30 April 2002, Mark Shuttleworth became the world's second space tourist. Shuttleworth is a South African businessman. At the age of twenty-eight, he also paid \$20 million for the eight-day trip. On the International Space Station, he helped the astronauts with research into AIDS.

Both Tito and Shuttleworth bought their tickets from a company called Space Adventures. The company has around 100 people already on their waiting list for flights into space. The spaceship to take them doesn't exist yet.

Many of the customers are people who like adventure. They are the kind of people who also want to climb Mount Everest. Other customers are people who love space.

However, these people are worried. Because it's so expensive, only very rich people can go into space. They want space travel to be available to more people. They dream of the day when there will be space hotels and sports centers all around the Earth, in space.

That day may soon be here. Inter Orbital System (IOS) plans to send up to four tourists a week into space. The tours will depart from an island in Tonga. The company promises a package that includes forty five days of astronauts training in Russia and California, seven days in space, and a vacation in Tonga, for \$2 million. However, space flight is still very dangerous. Bill Readdy is NASA's deputy assistant administrator for space flight. He says that the chances of dying are about 1 in 500. Because of this, it may take time before space tourism really takes off. You might be able to go up, but will you come down.

Taken from: **Reading keys. Miles Craven. MacMillan (p. 118)**

**EXERCISES**

1. Please choose words from the text and write them in each category. See the example

VERBS	PREPOSITIONS	NOUNS	ADJECTIVES
was	in	space	rewarding

2. Please match column A with B, look for the opposite of these adjectives

Column A	Column B
<b>expensive</b>	<b>like</b>
<b>sad</b>	<b>dangerous</b>
<b>dislike</b>	<b>rich</b>
<b>save</b>	<b>cheap</b>
<b>poor</b>	<b>happy</b>

3. Understanding the text

**a. Read the questions and write the answers**

- How old was Dennis Tito when he went into spaces? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who was the second tourist in the space? \_\_\_\_\_
- How much did they pay to go into space? \_\_\_\_\_
- How many days did each man spend in space? \_\_\_\_\_
- What company organized this for them? \_\_\_\_\_

**b. For each statement write true or false**

- \_\_\_\_\_ Mark Shuttleworth is from the USA
- \_\_\_\_\_ Space tours may soon depart from Tonga
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Company Space Adventures already has a spaceship.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Space travel is very expensive
- \_\_\_\_\_ Bill Readdy thinks space flight is very dangerous.

Appendix 3. **Progress test.**

## PROGRESS TEST

INSTITUCIÓN EDUCATIVA TÉCNICA MIGUEL DE CERVANTES SAAVEDRA IBAGUÉ

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: **2 hours**



In this section you must choose the word or phrase which best fits each space in the texts.  
**For questions 1 to 6, mark one letter A, B, C or D on your Answer Sheet.**

## ROBOTS



A robot is a machine. But it is not just any machine. It is a special kind of machine. It is a machine that moves. It follows instructions. The instructions come from a computer. Because it is a machine, it does not make mistakes. And it does not get tired. And it never complains. Unless you tell it to!

Robots are all around us. Some robots are used to make things. For example, robots can help make cars. Some robots are used to explore dangerous places. For example, robots can help explore volcanoes. Some robots are used to clean things. These robots can help vacuum your house. Some robots can even recognize words. They can be used to help answer telephone calls. Some robots look like humans. But most robots do not. Most robots just look like machines.

Long ago, people imagined robots. Over 2,000 years ago, a famous poet imagined robots. The poet's name was Homer. His robots were made of gold. They cleaned things and they made things. But they were not real. They were imaginary. Nobody was able to make a real robot. The first real robot was made in 1961. It was called Unimate. It was used to help make cars. It looked like a giant arm.

In the future, we will have even more robots. They will do things that we can't do. Or they will do things that we don't want to do. Or they will do things that are too dangerous for us. Robots will help us fight fires. They will help us fight wars. They will help us fight sickness. They will help us discover things. They will help make life better.

**1) As used in paragraph 1, we can understand that something *special* is NOT**

- A. normal
- B. expensive
- C. perfect
- D. tired

**2) According to the author, robots may be used to**

- I. make cars
- II. explore volcanoes
- III. answer telephone calls

- A. I only
- B. I and II only
- C. II and III only
- D. I, II, and III

**3) What is the main purpose of paragraph 2?**

- A. to show how easy it is to make a robot
- B. to tell what a robot is
- C. to describe the things a robot can do
- D. to explain the difference between a robot and a machine

**4) According to the passage, when was the first real robot made?**

- A. 1961
- B. 1900
- C. 2003
- D. 2000 years ago

**5) Using the information in the passage as a guide, which of these gives the best use of a robot?**

- A. to help make a sandwich
- B. to help tie shoes
- C. to help read a book
- D. to help explore Mars

**6) Which of these statements correctly summarizes how the author of this passage feels about robots?**

- A. Robots are old.
- B. Robots are confusing.
- C. Robots are helpful.

D. Robots are dangerous.

Taken from: [www.EnglishForEveryone.org](http://www.EnglishForEveryone.org)



Read the article about a circus.  
 Choose the best word (A, B or C) for each space.  
 For questions 28 . 35, mark A, B or C on your answer sheet

**A FAMOUS CIRCUS**



The circus, Cirque du Soleil, began (0) \_\_\_\_\_ Montreal, Canada. It was started (1) \_\_\_ the Canadian Guy Laliberté in 1984. When he left college, Laliberté travelled around Europe and earned money (2) \_\_\_ music in the streets. Not long after he returned home, he started Cirque with (3) \_\_\_ friend, Daniel Gauthier. During the 1990s, Cirque grew quickly. It now does shows (4) \_\_\_ over the world and the number of people working for it has grown from 73 to (5) \_\_\_ than 3,500. The Cirque does not have any animals, but (6) \_\_\_\_\_ is music and dance and each show tells a story. (7) \_\_\_\_\_ show, which is called Varian, is about a man who could fly. The show starts with him falling from the sky and tells the story of how he (8) \_\_\_\_\_ to learn to fly again.

**Example:**

- |          |                 |                |                  |
|----------|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>0</b> | <b>A in</b>     | <b>B at</b>    | <b>C to</b>      |
| <b>1</b> | <b>A from</b>   | <b>B by</b>    | <b>C of</b>      |
| <b>2</b> | <b>A played</b> | <b>B plays</b> | <b>C playing</b> |
| <b>3</b> | <b>A their</b>  | <b>B his</b>   | <b>C its</b>     |
| <b>4</b> | <b>A some</b>   | <b>B all</b>   | <b>C enough</b>  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>A more</b>   | <b>B much</b>  | <b>C most</b>    |
| <b>6</b> | <b>A this</b>   | <b>B it</b>    | <b>C there</b>   |
| <b>7</b> | <b>A One</b>    | <b>B Each</b>  | <b>C Both</b>    |
| <b>8</b> | <b>A need</b>   | <b>B must</b>  | <b>C has</b>     |

0	A	B	C
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Taken from: Key English Test for Schools. University Of Cambridge (2009:8)



**Read the text and answer the questions**

June 29<sup>th</sup>

**Dear Mom and Dad**



Here is a photo of Zocotal, in México City. I'm having a great time here. The weather is really good, and the family I'm staying with is very friendly. Anna-María my host mother, is great cook! I love the food here. The only problem is the language. Spanish is not as easy as you said, Dad. You told me Spanish is like English, but you put "a" or "o" after every word. Well, when I wanted some more soap! I asked Anna-María for "sopa". Five minutes later, she came to my room with a bowl of soup! At least now I know that "sopa" means "soup". We laughed about it. I apologized and said I was "embarrassado". Then, she laughed even more and ran to tell Carlos, my host father. He speaks a bit of English. He told me "embarrassado" means "pregnant" in Spanish. I felt terrible!

And that's not the only language problem! Yesterday in town, I had a sandwich at a café. When I wanted to pay, I tried to speak Spanish. I know that "como" is "how" so I said "como mucho" Thinking I was saying "How much?". The waiter just smiled and walked away. I tried "como mucho" again a few times, but then he brought me another sandwich! When I got back to my room, I looked at my Spanish book. I discovered that "como mucho" means "I eat a lot", "How much" is something completely different. Ah, well, at least I know now.

The most embarrassing mistake I made was in my Spanish class at school. We had to ask each other, “what’s your name?” in Spanish, this is “¿Cómo te llamas?”, but I got confused I said to my partner “Como ti amo”- which means “How I love you” Everyone laughed. I felt really bad!

Anyway, I am learning Spanish - slowly! The people here are great, and I love Mexico. Thanks so much for this trip, see you next month.

Lots of love

**Ben**

**1. Read the questions and write the answers**

- a. Who wrote the letter? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Which country is he visiting? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Who is Anne- Marie? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. What is the weather like? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. What problem does he have?**

**2. Choose the answer to each question**

**a. Where is Ben staying?**

1. in a hotel
2. With a friend
3. In a host family
4. with his family

**b. Why is Ben in México**

1. He’s working there
2. He’s learning Spanish
3. It’s his home
4. He’s visiting friends

**c. What problem does he have with Spanish?**

1. He doesn’t like the language
2. He makes a lot of mistakes
3. The class is too difficult for him
4. He doesn’t like his teacher

**d. Why did the waiter bring Ben another sandwich?**

1. Because he thought Ben was hungry
2. Because Ben asked for another sandwich
3. Because he wanted Ben to stay
4. Because He made a mistake

**e. What did Ben’s father tell him about México?**

1. Mexican food is great
2. It’s great place to go on vacation
3. Mexican people are very friendly
4. The language is similar to English

**ANSWER SHEET PROGRESS TEST**

**PART ONE**

Mark one letter for each question.

For example if you think C is the right answer to the question, mark your answer sheet like this

PART ONE				
1	A	B	C	D
2	A	B	C	D
3	A	B	C	D
4	A	B	C	D
5	A	B	C	D
6	A	B	C	D

0	A	B	C	D
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PART TWO

Mark one letter for each question.

For example if you think B is the right answer to the question, mark your answer sheet like this.

PART TWO				0	A	B	C	D
1	A	B	C					
2	A	B	C					
3	A	B	C					
4	A	B	C					
5	A	B	C					
6	A	B	C					
7	A	B	C					
8	A	B	C					

PART THREE

Mark one letter for each question.

For example if you think A is the right answer to the question, mark your answer sheet like this

PART THREE					0	A	B	C	D
A	1	2	3	4					
B	1	2	3	4					
C	1	2	3	4					
D	1	2	3	4					
E	1	2	3	4					