

**University of Pedagogical Sciences**

**“José de la Luz y Caballero”**

**Holguín**

**Liberal Arts Faculty**

**English Department**

# ***Diploma Paper***

TITLE: A SET OF TEXTS AND EXERCISES TO ENHANCE  
READING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS AT  
“MENELAO MORA0 MORALES” JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL.

Author: Antonio Puente Tamayo.

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## **Abstract**

The following work was conceived to contribute with the improvement of reading comprehension, stating that reading comprehension is a process in which the reader recognizes, actively interacting with the written text, the written symbols of the language, related to their meaning, getting up to the realization of a critical analysis from their own point of view, integrating all the knowledge acquired through daily life. It approaches reading comprehension departing from previous research carried out and tries to offer the teacher of English the connexion that may help to increase the teaching learning of the ability in the school.

## Introduction

The teaching of English in the educational system has taken relevance due to the necessity of adequating it to the real changes the world has been suffering lately. English has the status of official language in 53 countries and in most of the international organizations, as in the United Nations, European Union. Also the English language is widely used in commerce, communications and science and today is the most spoken, studied, and read language in the world.

The acquisition of a general and comprehensive culture presumes to gain in understanding, through reading, which is one of the main skills that the learner should acquire in the process of mastering a language. Through reading the learner improves his knowledge of the world around him. He increases his cultural background by understanding the culture of the native speakers, their ideas, and contributions in many aspects of cultural and intellectual stages.

Even though the teaching of English as a foreign language in intermediate level assumes a communicative and developmental approach and the main objective is considered oral communication, the author of this work considers that reading is the skill that should be given priority due to the real conditions and characteristics of the Cuban classrooms where there are a lot of students (more than 30) and because the main reason most of the people around the world study English as a foreign language is to read.

In 2004, in Cuba, a new syllabus was designed, and although it opened new ways for teaching English, the author considers it is necessary to elaborate supporting materials to overcome the deficiencies observed in the workbooks.

During his teaching practice, the author of this investigation has noticed that there was not exact coincidence between the social expectations, that is, the objectives of the grade stated in the syllabus and the results in their fulfilment.

This can be summed up as the limitation with the interest of the learners towards the content of the subject, manifested on their lack of mastery of the reading comprehension ability in English because of the weak effectiveness in the study of the subject in previous grades. Due to this the students' reading skills is poor. Also not all the texts used to teach reading favour the students' integral general culture and their interests and needs.

In this context, the **problem of investigation** is formulated in the following terms: How to enhance the reading comprehension ability through the teaching-

learning process of English as a foreign language, in ninth graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School in Holguín?

This problem is manifested in the objective reality in a specific area, which is considered, in scientific terms as the **research object**, which is determined as follows: the teaching-learning process of English as a foreign language.

The solution of the research problem is expressed in terms of the **research objective**: Elaboration of a set of texts and exercises to enhance reading comprehension skills in nine graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School in Holguín.

**Scope of action**: This research is going to exert his transformation in the motivation in the teaching-learning process of English reading comprehension ability in nine graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School in Holguín.

In order to conduct the research throughout a logical order, and thus solve the research problem, the following **scientific questions** have been formulated:

- 1- What is the current situation of reading comprehension in the teaching-learning process in nine graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School in Holguín?
- 2- Which are the theoretical foundations that might be used for enhancing reading comprehension?
- 3- Which texts and exercises can be elaborated to enhance reading comprehension in nine graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School?
- 4- How effective are the texts and exercises to improve reading comprehension in nine graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School?

In order to fulfil the scientific objective, following the logical order provided by the scientific questions, the following **scientific tasks** were determined:

1- To diagnose the current situation of reading comprehension in the teaching-learning process at " Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School

2- To determine the theoretical foundations for reading comprehension in English as a foreign language.

3- To select texts and elaborate exercises to improve nine graders' reading comprehension skills.

4- To evaluate the effectiveness of the texts and exercises to improve reading comprehension in nine graders at " Menelao Mora Morales " Junior High School.

## **Research methods**

To fulfil the scientific tasks, the following research methods were used:

### **Theoretical methods:**

#### **Analysis-Synthesis, Induction-Deduction, and Abstract to**

**Concrete**, in a dialectical interrelation, were used in order to study the different bibliographies with reference to the teaching-learning process of reading comprehension and other categories. In the same way, this method contributed to the analysis of the information obtained in the facto-perceptual stage of the research.

**Modelation:** To structure a set of texts and exercises according to the students' level and interests to increase their motivation towards the subject and to improve the effectiveness of the formation of their communicative competence in the foreign language, emphasizing reading comprehension.

### **Empirical methods:**

**Observation:** To define regularities and the main characteristics of the teaching-learning process at the previously mentioned school.

**Documentary study:** Useful for the methodological characterization of the lessons plans and syllabus of the English subject in junior high school.

**Survey:** Applied to students to know the topics in which they are interested and aspects related to the object of the investigation.

**Interview:** Applied to teachers to substantiate the scientific problem. (To obtain information on aspects related to the preparation and presentation of the lesson to deal with reading comprehension)

### **Novelty:**

The novelty of this research investigation is based on presenting a proposal of a set of texts and exercises to enhance reading comprehension skills in nine graders at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School. For the proposal, the author used authentic texts of their interest written in English. Initially materials for selecting the texts to be used in class were gathered with the previous opinion of the students. Among the preferences of them they highlighted universal culture.

## Chapter 1

### **Theoretical basis of the teaching-learning process of English reading comprehension in nine grade at Menelao Mora Morales Junior High School.**

#### **1.1-The current situation of the English reading comprehension teaching-learning process in nine grade at “Menelao Mora Morales” Junior High School.**

The process of English reading comprehension in Junior high School is present in every unit of the syllabus. Through the texts selected teachers can focus on the grammatical structures and the vocabulary studied in the units, also taking advantage of the contents to increase the students' culture and to form values. These texts may be about personalities, historical events or real situations. The activities suggested do not fulfil the necessary requirement for the total comprehension of the texts. That's why there are some texts and exercises proposed in this research to favor the development of reading comprehension skills.

To obtain information about the way the teaching-learning process of the English language occurred ten English lessons were visited. In most of the lessons observed (annex 4) , teachers used texts whose level of complexity corresponded to the students' level and that favoured values for education. But the exercises were not aimed at that purpose. The same types of exercises were used in every lesson, not taking into account the students' needs, interests and age. The reading phases were not taken into account when planning and teaching the lessons. The students kept a passive attitude, showing no

enthusiasm during the development of the lessons. Some of them were not given the opportunity to participate.

Moreover, an interview was applied to two teachers who work with nine grade, they knew what the main objective of the reading comprehension lessons was. They stated that they used the exercises already elaborated by the authors of the workbook, and did not elaborate new ones. Also, a survey (See appendix 3) was applied to nine graders to find out their opinions about the English reading comprehension lessons. Most of them answered that they would like to learn the English language. They agreed that the texts were interesting. According to their opinions, the activities developed in the lessons were about answering questions, finding specific pieces of information and true or false exercises.

The empirical methods applied in the earliest stage of this investigation revealed that although there was not a good selection of reading materials, teachers were not using the right methodological procedures to fulfil the objectives of the lessons, and the exercises were neither varied nor attractive so as to stimulate the students' Interest for reading. Besides, teachers did not take into account the individual character of learning since there were students who didn't get the support that they needed for answering the activities. At last, it was corroborated that the lack of creativity was the cause for the students' disinterest and apathy.

To solve the problems already stated which are the early results of this investigation it is quite important to have in mind the characteristics of the students of nine grade. Adolescence is a phenomenon characterized by various psychosexual and social changes, but all these changes do not occur in the same way and at the same time in every individual. Some students are not so mature and behave like children. These elements constitute a challenge for teachers; that is, they cannot fail to regard these biological facts when teaching. Most of these students selected for the sample were not taught the English subject in primary school, so their knowledge of the English language goes from quite limited to nearly none. Moreover there are some students that have their psychological sphere affected due to economic, social and environmental problems, in some other cases there are health problems which may interfere with their concentration.

## **1.2- The reading comprehension process**

It has been stated that reading comprehension is a complex cognitive process of decoding symbols for the intention of building or deriving meaning. It is the mastery of basic cognitive processes to the point where they are automatic so that attention is freed for the analysis of meaning. Besides, reading is a means of language acquisition of communication, and of sharing information and ideas. As in every language, it is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is formed by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. The reading process requires continuous practices and development.

Reading is a medium of communication, the ability of getting information from written language.

The concept of reading comprehension encloses at least five basic attitudes closely related such as: the reading arrangement of what have been read; analysis of the content, literary interpretation and appreciation.

Reading comprehension is the final product of the analysis the reader does of the peculiarities of the text (vocabulary, structure) intervene as well as the experience of the reader text at different levels.

When a person reads, he tries to relate the new information in the text to what is already known. The reader must make connections between what a text is about and external absent objects, ideas and people. When the reader focuses primarily on what is already known in trying to comprehend a text, this strategy "is called a concept driven or "top-down" mode. On the other hand, when the reader relies primarily on textual information to comprehend, this strategy is called a data-driven or "bottom-up" mode (Rumelhart, 1980).

Reading is a medium of communication, the power to get Information from written language; it is an active, thought- getting, problem- solving process. In this process, the reader must make an active contribution by drawing upon and using concurrently various abilities that he has acquired. Reading is a constant process of guessing, and what one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it. That is why, from the very beginning, the students should be taught to use what they know to understand unknown elements, whether these are ideas or simple words (Grellet 1981).

Reading comprehension depends on the reader's ability to interrelate his knowledge appropriately and the information suggested by the text (Mason, 1984).

Models are usually partial rather than complete, that they are often subject to later revisions, depending on research conducted, and that they are not programs for reading pedagogies. Moreover, it is difficult to compare reading model for several reasons: they are somewhat limited by the period in which the work was done. (Kamil 1984).

Reading is gathering of abilities as well as a complex and variable process in a mean and as a goal as a means, reading is a tool to renew information, and specifically to learn the written language as a goal, reading end in its comprehension and interpretation (Alvarez, 1989).

**Reading Comprehension:** is the process through which the student-reader, in interaction with the written texts and in an active position, decodes its meaning, from understanding to the level of making a critical analysis, based on his own Cosmo vision. As a skill in formation, it passes through different stages and requires of the apprehension of strategies which might be used in different kinds of reading. The effectiveness of this process requires of the integration with the rest of the verbal skills in the foreign language and of a strong entailment between affective-motivational and cognitive elements. (Medina , A. 2002).

Comprehend is not to make a literal interpretation, only decode the information; comprehend is to interact with the written text, in a way that, applying known schemes of knowledge, one person already has, the meaning intended to be transmitted could be rebuilt. As an intellectual process, comprehension includes getting the meaning that others have transmitted by means of sounds, images, colors and movement.

The terms **Skimming, Scanning, Receptive Reading and Intensive reading** are sometimes used to describe different types of the reading comprehension skill and with **skimming** involve a quick reading of a text to derive the gist of it. It includes a degree of interest, inference and interpretation.

**Scanning** is a visual skill more than an interpretative one. Readers look quickly through a text in order to find particular information. **Intensive reading** is used when the reader pays attention to the exact words which are used. **Receptive reading** means that the reading makes emphasis on the informational context. This is sometimes referred to extensive reading.

There are different types of reading the student must be aware of because they will be useful not only in the classroom, but also in his/her future life as an independent reader:

1. **Skimming:** It involves looking through a text quickly to get the gist of it. It involves a degree of inference and interpretation.

2. **Scanning:** When scanning the reader looks for a particular item or items that might be in the text. Here the reader also reads quickly, rejecting whatever he/she considers irrelevant. It is a visual skill more than an interpretative one.

3. **Intensive reading:** It involves a close study of the text. The amount of comprehension in this type of reading is high, so the speed of reading is slower.

4. **Extensive reading:** It involves reading of longer texts, usually for one's own pleasure, it usually involves global understanding.

Students may need practice in choosing the way to approach a particular text and in using the different skills of skimming, scanning, intensive and extensive reading in the process of reading a text. The characteristic of the text as well, of the purpose in reading it, will determine which of this skill the most appropriate one is.

In order to reach the final stage in the process, we must consciously develop in our students the three basic reading skills which constitute the objectives of reading: comprehension, vocabulary and speed.

Comprehension consists of the representation or organization of the information in terms of a previously acquired knowledge (Vixon and Peter, 1987).

Comprehension: It takes place when ideas, not words, are read.

Vocabulary:

It is the ability the students gradually acquire to incorporate new words as they widen their reading, provided the contents of the passage are properly graded and the learning of vocabulary correctly guided.

Speed:

In reading is of great importance. Slow readers cannot read as much as normal readers, because they find it too hard. Furthermore, they retain little of what they read because they pay so much attention to individual words that they cannot get the meaning of the phrases.

The fact of considering reading a communicative process implies to follow some communicative principles during the methodological treatment of a text. Likewise it is essential to value reading as a complex process during which the reader carries out mental operations inherent to scientific thinking. It tells the teachers to be effective in designing activities to teach the students to think and learn to learn.

Reading comprehension follows three phases that should be taken into account by teachers, they are:

## 1.2- Phases of reading

Foreign teaching learning is a complex activity. To teach reading the teacher must often design lesson plans for chosen texts. Although reading specialists have their own theories to help students learn and practice the necessary skills for proficient reading. This plan contains three stages: pre-reading; while – reading and post- reading.

- ✓ **-Pre-reading:** its main goal is to make the students get a positive attitude towards the reading mainly by activating elements they have already learned. They predict and anticipate the content of the text by a brain storming activity, by answering questions.
- ✓ **-While reading:** this stage is mainly characterized by the interaction of the students with the text, which provides the possibility to understand the ideas expressed in the text and builds its meaning. Help students develop reading strategies, improve control of the foreign language, decode problematic text passages, Skimming and scanning for information in the text.

They may be done in class or independently. It is important that student while reading does not lose the thread of the text because of a word or verb tense misinterpreted. To intervene in a reader's process, questions could ask about text segments, offer hints to aid comprehension, or have the reader talk about what they are thinking about.

..."it does not yet know whether such interventions are beneficial or detrimental to a reader's comprehension and improvement in reading skill". ( Melendez and Pritchard, 1985).

“On the other hand, many students appreciate receiving help on strategies development both before and while read”. (Barnet, 1988c, Kern, 1988). Depending on the text, students, and exercises, some strategies practice works best during class and some while students work independently.

- ✓ **-Post reading:** means to elaborate ideas from new viewpoints; the students go from the understanding of elements in a text to their own explanations of these elements. The students value the author’s intention and emphasis is given to get a critical approach. Also the students may provide an ending to the text, create a new story or a conversation based on the content of the text.

Post-reading exercises check the student’s comprehension and then lead students to a deeper analysis of the text when warranted. These exercises may take a variety of forms, and typology. After the reading teacher and students ascertain how well the text was understood. Since traditional comprehension checks generally focus on text details, many students learn to answer not by understanding the text but by looking progressively through the text following as they go. (Phillips 1985) shows how learners can answer comprehension questions without processing meaning.

During these stages the students will develop the following reading skills:

- To predict the content of the text
- To anticipate the content of the text
- To make hypothesis
- To infer ideas and information not explicitly stated
- To understand the relations established
- To identify the general idea of the text
- To distinguish main ideas from supporting ideas
- To understand ideas explicitly stated
- To extract salient points
- To summarize the text
- To take notes
- To recognize the author’s intention.
- To identify the communicative function of the text
- To recognize the ways structure of the text

- To understand the sequence of the text
- To assess the text
- To use the dictionary
- To obtain the gist (main ideas) from a text
- To locate specific information
- To recognize familiar words
- To use the context to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words.

Reading as a comprehension skill has theoretical principles that help reading and understanding written text such as:

1—Comprehension is an active process which help decoding and interpreting written texts and developing the reader's ability.

2--Understanding is making a logical, reasonable interpretation: when a student reads a text, he/she makes logical analysis, taking into account what they already know about the topic, giving his own interpretation. Different readers facing the same text may or may not coincide in their interpretation and it does not precisely mean some of them are wrong.

3—Reading is a silent an individual activity, reading is a silent interaction between the reader and the text.

4—The reader generally has some knowledge about the topic. The average reader has basic background knowledge about the topics.

5--Most texts can be used to develop the reading comprehension skill: degree of difficulty should be according to the student's needs and capacities.

6--Teaching is not evaluating knowledge: as teaching the development of certain ability is aided, the reading activities proposed to students must not pursue evaluation of knowledge, but help the students learn to understand easier and better the messages written in a text and, develop reading strategies.

7-- It is more important to understand the information needed that understand all the text. There is not need to get all the information, this could overwhelm the reader.

People read for a variety of purposes and according to these purposes, in a variety of ways. Although reading is always to involve the deriving meaning from a text, our purpose in reading determines the kind of meaning and the amount of meaning we look for.

Learners may need practice in choosing in what way to approach a particular

text and in using the different skills to read a text. The choice of this skill will depend on factors such as the nature of the text and the purpose in reading it, as well as, on purely pedagogical factors for example, which skill the teacher is concerned that the students should develop in a particular lesson.

## Chapter 2

### Criteria for selecting texts

Comprehension depends on the readers expectations, as defined by its content, first language, reading strategies, reading skills, interests and purpose. Teachers need to learn how to activate background knowledge about text, topic, author's points of view, etc. Teachers should also design lessons taking into account chosen texts to help students learn and develop skills. They should not disregard the reading phases as methodological requirements.

According to Medina, (as he states in his glossary) a text: " ...is more than ink in a paper; it's a reflection of the thoughts, feelings, experience, knowledge, etc. of the author at a particular point in time and in a particular social situation."

Authentic texts are vital. They motivate the students. They not only offer a real context, but transmit the target language culture and prepare the students for reading outside the classroom.

Authentic texts are those which are written originally by native speakers of the target language having as a main purpose to communicate meaning .Adapted texts destroy useful references which alter the author's intention.

Regarding authentic texts, the author embrace the criterion registered in Longman Dictionary of Applied linguistics that reads:

**Authenticity:** the degree to which a language teaching materials have the qualities of natural speech or writing. Texts which are taken from newspapers, magazines, etc, and tapes of natural speech taken ordinary radio or television, programs, etc, are called authentic materials. When a teacher prepares texts or tapes to use in classroom, he often has to use simplified examples"

Other aspects considered:

- A minimal demand of writing so that the answers not affected by language problems-no direct questions to guarantee comprehension – graded, contextualized and other skill-related exercises.
- Its suitability, readability and explorability.

**Readability:** It is the combination of structural and lexical difficulty. Lexical difficulty is fairly easy to assess if the teacher knows the students. He can mark

all new words and phrases, remembering to include new use of familiar words and new idiomatic combination. The quantity of new lexical items should be high when choosing a text, otherwise, it would skip aims of the reading program and it would not be an effective way to teach vocabulary, although to get the gist of the text some unfamiliar words can be avoided but it could risk through understanding.

Differing from lexical difficulty, structure difficulty is harder to assess but is actually important, new grammatical forms such as tense, structural words, etc may lead to problems. The sentence length is one of cause of structural difficulty, as well as the sentence complexity, which can make the relationship between the various parts of the reading difficulty for the student's to short out.

**Suitability:** This aspect is easier to be follow, but an important step since what an educator needs besides selecting reading materials is to carry out a research to find out which students likes and interest are.

**Explorability:** Texts should be exploited to develop student's comprehension, if not, texts tend to be non-useful even if the students enjoy reading. A relevant feature of explorability is that the texts should not be use to teach language but, to have the students learn how language is used to convey content. They are to develop the skills needed to extract the information from the language that expresses it.

**-For selecting texts, the following elements were considered:**

- Teachers must often choose appropriate readings for their students.
- Teachers should motivate their students by selecting and presenting relevant reading materials.
- More comprehensive texts tend to be those with a clear and identifiable structure, familiar content, reasonable level of sentence complexity and vocabulary on the topics.
- Teachers should try to direct students towards reading materials related to the most important values, such as patriotism, dignity, humanism.

## **Criteria for devising exercises:**

The teacher can motivate the students making them guess or predict about what they believe the text is going to deal with, maybe by asking questions about their lives experiences. In most of the cases, the teacher should use questions for making, the students enhance their skills and not just for the sake of answering. Debating, discussing and sharing ideas in class allow the students to expose their knowledge and experience of what they have learned.

- A text should start with global understanding and move towards a detailed understanding rather than working the other way around.
- The exercises devoted to begin with must be of a more global type.
- The first things a reader should do are getting acquainted to the typeface of the text, guessing what the text is about, skimming through the text, conforming their guesses or predictions. It is suggested to integrate reading comprehension with other skills (writing, listening and speaking).
- The exercises should be flexible. They should be devising taking into consideration the author's point of view, intentions or tones, in order to get a total comprehension of the text.
- An exercise should never be imposed on a text; they suit the purpose of communicating meaning.
- The exercises should be integrative; they should integrate language, skills and contents.
- The exercises should promote development.

The proposal of texts and exercises in this investigation may be used in different units of the syllabus of English at "Menelao Mora Morales" junior high school.

# **A set of texts and exercises to enhance the reading comprehension skill in 9<sup>th</sup> graders at “Menelao Mora Morales” Junior high school.**

## **Text -1: “Africa”.**

Objective: To understand the content of the text “Africa”, by identifying the general idea of the text and answering questions to develop knowledge about racial discrimination.

-The face of Africa was concealed from the world by myths and prejudices of all kinds. African societies were regarded as societies without a history; in spite of the studies produced in the early decades of this century, many non-african scholars, maintained that such societies could not be studied scientifically because sources and written documents were lacking.

They did not want to see Africans as the creators of original cultures which blossomed and perpetuated themselves for centuries in distinctive ways of their own.

Furthermore, the African continent was virtually never considered as historical entity. On the contrary, stress was laid on everything which might give credit to the idea of a division since time immemorial, between a “white Africa” and a “black Africa”, each ignorant of the other.

The Sahara was often presented as an impenetrable expanse which completely prevented any mixing of ethnic groups, any exchange of goods, beliefs, customs and ideas between the societies established on each side of the desert.

From the moment when the notions of “whites” and “blacks” were adopted to serve as generic descriptions of the masters and the dominated peoples respectively, Africans had to struggle against a dual enslavement, economic and psychological.

## Excercise-1:

Listen to the reading model and determine which of the following ideas are closely related to the text:

- Prejudices against African people through the History of mankind.
- A brief look to African continent.
- Struggle for human rights.

a-) what do you know about racial discrimination?

1-Say True, False or It doesn't say to the following sentences:

- African societies are considered cultures with a long and rich history.
- The African continent is considered the most important historical entity.
- Africans are fighting against enslavement since the notions of "black" and "whites" were adopted.
- The first tribes of men came from Africa.
- The Sahara desert was considered a natural barrier that prevented the contact among the different ethnic groups.

a-) Find in the text:

- 1-A synonym of: fight.
- 2- The English equivalent of: creencias.
- 3- A synonym of: legend.
- 4- An antonym of: separating.

Answer the following questions:

a-) What is the reading about?

- b-) Why do you think the scientists did not want to recognize Africa as a historical entity?
- c-) What did the Sahara desert represent in African History?
- d-) Why do you think Africans had to fight against enslavement?
- e-) Do you think Africans still struggle for a place in modern society? Why?
- f-) Write down the general idea of the text.

## **TEXT- 2:**

**Title:** "Dreaming and health".

**Objective:** To comprehend the text "Dreaming and health", by inferring the meaning of new words, and identifying the general idea of the text to increase the student's knowledge about the topic.

The branch of science that studies dreams is very young, but it is so important that the National Institute of Mental Health in Russia is supporting a considerable number of different projects relating to the study of dreams because of their possible influence on people's health.

Dreams can affect the whole spectrum of human feelings and lack of them can increase anxiety, tension, depression and severe mental diseases. Dream research may well lead to new concepts about health and to new medical treatments using drugs to manipulate dreams and to increase or reduce their number. It is now believed that through dream control it may be possible to control night-time heart attacks, asthma, ulcer and other medical problems.

There is evidence that dreaming occurs even in unborn babies. Investigators suggest that it plays a key role in developing the brain before outside sensory experiences are possible. It prepares the brain- and the whole nervous system- for the sensory experiences which come with birth.

Scientific exploration of dreaming has gone far. It is evident that dreaming is not just a curious island of consciousness in a sea of unconsciousness. We need dreams –enough of them and healthy ones- for physical and mental wellbeing.

- 1- Read carefully the first paragraph and say what you think the text is about.
- 2 - What do you think about this topic?

1- Find in the text:

- a-) The English equivalent for: enfermedades mentales severas.
- b-) A synonym of: all.
- c-) An antonym of: decrease.
- d-) The English equivalent of: bienestar.
- e-) A phrase that means: Hay evidencias de que incluso los bebés aún no nacidos tienen sueños.

a-) Find out whatever you can find about dreams on encyclopedias, reports, pieces of news, etc.

Be ready to comment on them in class.

b-) Make a summary of the text in Spanish. You can support yourself through previous exercises.

c-) Write down your opinion about this topic.

### **Text- 3: "Criminality".**

1- Criminality is a social phenomenon. It consists of many individual acts committed by many or individual persons.

2- Since criminality affects and is affected by almost every aspect of social life, the cooperation of specialists working in such fields as social sciences, laws, education, psychology and others is essential to eliminate it from our life.

3- In socialist countries the social structure is based on collective property of the means of production. Collective production and collective appropriation contribute to co-operation, mutual regard of the individuals, mutual help and support, and the emphasis on the social side of man.

4- Therefore, this model of behavior excludes the irrational fight of man against man and these results in the reduction of criminality, a tendency that can be observed in all socialist countries.

5- Although criminality is alien to socialism, one cannot ignore the fact that crime still exists in our society. The new models of behaviour cannot be formed and become common knowledge at once automatically.

6-Certain individuals sometimes break the law to the detriment of the interests of the society in which they live and of their own interests because crime leads to self destruction of the individual without solving his problems or conflicts.

7- There remains the vitally important problems of combating crime; the systematic study of all the measures to be taken in the spheres of prevention, of legislation, of the enforcement of criminal law, of punishments and other methods of treatment. It is not enough to investigate the reasons for the existence of crime; we must find the most effective ways of eliminating it.

Ice breaker (warm up)

a-) What do you think about criminality in our society?

b-) Is that a good idea? Why?

-You may answer in English or Spanish.

1- Arrange in chronological order:

\_\_\_We must find the most effective way of eliminating it.

\_\_\_You cannot ignore that criminality still exists in our society.

\_\_\_It's a social phenomenon.

\_\_\_In socialist countries the social structure is based in mutual help and support.

\_\_\_This model of behavior excludes the irrational fight of man against man.

\_\_\_Some individuals break the law in detriment of the society.

\_\_\_The cooperation of specialists is essential.

a-) what's your opinion about criminality?

b-) Do you think that the way people are educated may contribute to decrease criminality in society? Why?

c-) Work in pairs and find information about this topic. Be ready to report it. .

**Text -4: "Madagascar myth".**

Objective: To comprehend the text "Madagascar myth" by inferring the meaning of new words and identifying the general idea of the text to increase the student's knowledge about history.

One day God asked the first human couple what kind of death they wanted – that of the moon or that of the banana. The couple wondered what the difference was, so God explained. The banana puts forth shoots that take its place but the moon itself comes back to life.

The couple considered for a long time before they made their choice. If they decided to be childless like the moon, they could avoid death for themselves, but they could also be very lonely and would themselves have to carry out all the work and would not have anyone to work for and love.

So they asked God for children, well aware that their life would be like that of the banana. Their request was granted.

Since that time, human life on this earth is very short.

### **Exercises:**

1- a-) Read the first sentence of the paragraph and say what you think the text is going to be about.

1- Choose what you think the appropriate idea of the text is:

- Belief in immortality.
- The importance of sacrifice.
- The importance of life.

b-) This Myth is originary from:

- Northern Asia.
- Southern Africa.
- South America.

c-) What do you think the author's intention with this text was ?

- to be scared of death.

\_\_\_ to believe in immortality.

\_\_\_ about thinking not just in yourself but in the ones around you.

a-) which do you think the general idea of the text is?

b-) If you have the chance of giving another title to this text, what would that be?

Discuss with your partner why you chose that title.

### **Text- 5: ‘‘Myths about Death’’.**

Objective: To comprehend the text ‘‘Myths about Death’’ by inferring new words, and identifying the general idea of the text to increase the student’s knowledge about universal culture.

We all realize that life does not go on forever, and what happens after death is a common subject in myths. Most of us think that death is not the end, and there are many myths that try to describe the afterlife. The famous psychologist Carl Jung, said that it is healthy and good for us to think that death is not the end. Our bodies need salt, and we always eat salty things to satisfy that need, even though we do not know why we need salt. Jung said it is the same with our minds and hearts. We need to feel that life has a purpose after death, even though we do not have full understanding of why we need to think that way. Many beautiful myths dealing with death had been written.

People have observed life and death in nature and noted three kinds of evidence that influence myths about death. One is evidence from things that do not appear to die – the sun, the moon, and the stars, for example, which are often associated with immortal gods.

The second is evidence from things that appear to die, but come back to life – trees, plants, and other living things that come and go with the seasons. The third is evidence that all living things must devour other things in order to survive. It appears that some living creatures have to die in order that others may live. Where does human life fit in? Are we immortal? Do we grow old, only to be reborn in some new form after our life cycle? Should we kill in order to survive?

## Exercises:

- 1- ) a-) what do you think when you see the world "Myth" ?  
b-) Have you ever read any myth or legend?

2- ) find in the text a sentence that means:

-El segundo es evidencia de cosas que parecen morir, pero que regresan a la vida.

-Parece que algunas criaturas deben morir para que otras puedan vivir.

3- ) Answer these questions from the text:

a-) Who is Carl Jung ?

b-) What did he say ?

c-) What do most of the people think about death ?

d-) Which is the first evidence that people have observed about death in nature?

e-) Which is the second one ?

f-) Which is the third one ?

## Chapter 3

### Corroboration of the effectiveness of the proposal

The corroboration of the results obtained after the application of the activities proposed is presented in this chapter. Pedagogical experience was carried out, which was conducted directly by the author of this Diploma Paper with a sample selected from the total population of students. The diagnosis proved that the students have serious limitations towards the new contents.

Since the beginning of the present academic year, this group has faced difficulties because of the low English cognitive knowledge of its students, due to the lack of teachers that helped them to acquire the necessary skills in the foreign language teaching at "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School.

However, during the teaching-learning process they have shown their abilities to stay focused whenever the teacher motivates correctly the lessons using the exercises towards their needs, as students who learn English as a foreign language.

That is why they were easily motivated when the type of activities used are varied and satisfy their interests. Nevertheless, according to the diagnose, there were a lot of them with problems in the reading comprehension skill, not because of their capacity as learners, but because this skill was not well formed, and on the other hand, because they did not like the syllabus, which they considered it does not respond to their interests and motivation.

This situation might permit the observation of the gradual transformation taking place as a result of the application of the set of texts and exercises.

A group of 40 students was chosen to carry out the pedagogical experience. The students selected belong to group 3, from nine grade. Their specific characteristics facilitated the author to focus on his attention and to think over their potentialities to develop the reading comprehension skills.

Five reading comprehension lessons were taught to confirm in practice the level of impact of the proposal and it was observed that the students showed

enthusiasm during the solution of the exercises. Moreover, they participated recurrently and prepared consciously their answers. To verify this, the author took into account these indicators:

- Level of general acceptance of the English reading comprehension lesson by the students.
- Acceptance and rejection by the students when the teacher introduced the texts and exercises
- The different phases of the reading comprehension process.
- To carry out the comprehension of the text from partial to total understanding
- Concentration and attention from the students during the development of the exercises.

And the following results were obtained:

- The students showed high levels of acceptance towards the texts and exercises related with reading comprehension.
- The students liked the reading texts proposed as well as the set of exercises since they contain a varied vocabulary.
- The students showed motivation and interest when the activities were developed.
- The texts and exercises proposed go from global to total understanding which facilitated a better comprehension of the reading material on the part of the students.
- The students showed a high level of concentration of their attention in the development of the activities.

An initial test was applied in order to know the level of proficiency of the group.

4 students from the group are characterized as high proficiency students

21 students are considered as average

15 students are considered low proficiency students

The following is a brief description of the results of introducing the texts and exercises proposed in this Diploma Paper:

In order to know the opinion of the students for simulating the anticipatory mechanism in the reading comprehension skill in nine grade students a survey (annex 3) was applied, and the following results were corroborated:

- Thirty one students liked a set of activities proposed because they considered them an effective way to learn English as a foreign language, specifically in the reading comprehension skill.
  - Five students did not like the set of exercises because they have difficulties through the process of learning.
  - Four students were not interested because they have problems in the development of language skills.

The results obtained through the pedagogical experience corroborated the proliferation of the student's interest to learn the language and their motivation towards the lessons as well as the proposal of texts and exercises to support reading comprehension. This could be used with the rest of students of nine grade

## **Conclusions**

The importance given to the development of reading comprehension skill in the foreign language teaching in the Cuban National System of Education, still have limitations, for devising activities to let the students use the language partially and creatively.

The assumption of the communicative approach of the language for devising reading comprehension skill activities opens wider possibilities for fostering interactional and transactional relations in the English class focusing on values and cultural formation towards the development of an integral personality.

## Recommendations

The author states the following:

- 1- To keep on working on the reading comprehension line.
- 2- The set of exercises should be completed and applied to improve the development of the reading comprehension skill.
- 3- All the information provided must be saved for further investigations on this topic, and generalized through methodological sessions and projects.
- 4- Due to the flexibility of this set of exercises, teachers have the possibility of adapting and selecting the exercises in accordance with their students' possibilities and necessities.
- 5- To deal with this topic in future workshops.

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# Appendix 1:

-Interview applied to English language teachers:

Dear teacher: We are doing a research about the development of the reading comprehension skill in 9<sup>th</sup> grade students, we would be glad to count with your support.

Questions:

1- How do you evaluate the reading comprehension skill?

2- What kind of texts, activities and/or exercises do you implement to develop your reading comprehension lessons?

3- How do you consider student's attitudes towards your reading comprehension lessons?

4. - How could you improve in your students the reading comprehension skill?

## Appendix 2:

-Survey applied to teachers.

Objective: To diagnose the state of the problem detected.

Dear professor:

We are making a research work in order to know how reading comprehension is carried out through the English lessons. We appreciate your cooperation.

-Age \_\_\_\_\_ -Sex \_\_\_\_\_

-Working experience \_\_\_\_\_

How is your students' motivation towards the reading comprehension lessons?

-Bad \_\_\_\_\_ -Regular \_\_\_\_\_ -Good \_\_\_\_\_ Excellent \_\_\_\_\_

How often in the unit do you deal with reading comprehension lessons ?

-Never \_\_\_\_\_ -Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_

-Always \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think the exercises you use in these types of lessons fulfil the expectation of your students in order to improve the reading comprehension skill ? Why ?

Sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ -Frequently \_\_\_\_\_

-Always \_\_\_\_\_

Do you feel prepared for developing reading comprehension abilities in your students?

-Enough prepared \_\_\_\_\_ -Prepared \_\_\_\_\_

-Somehow prepared \_\_\_\_\_ -Not prepared \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3

Survey to 9th grade students from "Menelao Mora Morales" Junior High School in Holguín.

Estimados estudiantes:

Se esta realizando un trabajo investigativo sobre la comprensión lectora, en el que sus opiniones son muy importantes, por lo cual pedimos su más sincera colaboración con sus respuestas a las siguientes interrogantes.

Objetivo: Diagnosticar el estado se desarrollo de la habilidad de comprensión lectora en estudiantes de noveno grado.

Gracias.

1- \_\_\_ Sexo      \_\_\_ Edad

2- ¿Te sientes motivado hacia las clases de inglés?

\_\_\_ Si      \_\_\_ a veces      \_\_\_ no

3- ¿Sabes qué es la comprensión lectora?

\_\_\_ Si      \_\_\_ no

4- Partiendo de los ejercicios que se realizan en clase,  
¿Consideras que has mejorado en tu habilidad de comprender los textos propuestos?

\_\_\_ Si      \_\_\_ No      \_\_\_ Un poco

5- ¿Crees que dichos ejercicios te ayudan a desarrollar tu capacidad de leer y comprender?

Si                     No                     Algunas veces

6- ¿Deseas sugerir temas nuevos? Cuáles?

7- ¿Estos ejercicios te han ayudado de alguna manera en el uso del idioma en situaciones de la vida cotidiana?

Si                     No                     A veces                     Nunca

6- ¿Qué consideras más difícil en esta asignatura?

8- ¿Son de tu agrado los textos impartidos por tu profesor?

# Appendix 4

## Observation to English Lessons

**Objective:** To observe the development of the reading comprehension skill in the English lessons within the teaching – learning process.

### Observation guide applied to lessons:

1- The teaching – learning process based on potentiating the reading comprehension strategies was done into the English lesson.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ Partially\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

2- The teacher has the students participating actively during the lesson.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ Partially\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

3- The teacher orients many varied exercises that arouse the students' attention.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ Partially\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

4- The teacher devises reading comprehension exercises according to the different levels of assimilation.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ Partially\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

5- The exercises used during the lesson were contextualized according to students' needs in the English language.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ Partially\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_

