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THE HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK OF THE UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE NUEVO LEÓN -A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF ITS READING SECTION-

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Whether we like it or not, the curriculum in most American schools is not defined by courses of study or suggested programs, but by one particular artifact, the standardized, grade-level specific text in mathematics, reading, social studies, science… and so on. The impact of this on the social relations of the classroom is also immense. It is estimated, for example, that 75 percent of the time elementary and secondary students are in classrooms and 90 percent of their time on homework is spent with text materials.

Apple 1986: 85

Introduction

Remarking the importance textbooks play in the teaching learning process, the issue of concern of this paper is to present a sample of the reading section of the English textbook, designed for high school students of the *Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* in Monterrey, México. The author, as one of the developers of this material seeks to present reading in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) course. Different theoretical views of reading are presented and also approaches in which students can improve reading. The reading section of this textbook, named *Time to Read!*, is examined through one of its reading passages and tasks.

The purpose is to demonstrate the interactive reading that is done in the reading section of the textbook besides evaluating if this is what the textbook's writers claim. An approach that, by means of pre-, while- and post-reading activities, permits students to have access to the context of situation of the text and to its content according to Wallace (1992) proposal. A brief description of the general features of the syllabus is introduced as "the teacher brings into the classroom the syllabus, often embodied in a textbook" (Allwright and Baily 1991:18). Then, since the general objective

of the English course in high school of the *Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* is to develop reading comprehension in order to obtain and use information from English written texts. A general overview of research findings and theoretical views of reading in the EFL course are introduced.

Considering the relevance of this examination, since this textbook is studied by nearly 30,000 university students at this level. "There are of course teachers who use other teaching/learning materials, but usually these come to supplement or support the basic textbook. Hence, it is the one single textbook that determines choices of content and method" (Dendrinos 1992: 25). This paper attempts to be an objective presentation and examination of the textbook's reading section in which it was detected the incorporation of top down and bottom-up reading processes which are recommended since both are complementary. However, findings about effective readers detected that they were able to decode faster. Based on that, textbooks are the principal instructional means in which most of the skills and knowledge to be learned are embodied, exercises that seek to promote fast decoding, that is word recognition exercises are proposed by the author to be included to improve the material in its reading section.

READING IN THE EFL COURSE

Scholars such as Krashen and Nutall (Nutall 1982) have identified reading as an effective provider of language input in class or outside class, alone or with others, through reading not only vocabulary and syntactic development is encouraged but also writing. Thus, reading promotes language acquisition.

With regard to the role reading plays in a language course, most of the time a difference between reading in the native language and in foreign language is present. In the latter, reading is usually related to language learning or improvement. It has explicitly the purpose of teaching the language *per se*. This is different from what happens when reading is achieved in the native language. Although it is recognized that reading increases language proficiency either in the native or foreign language. The value of reading in the foreign language includes not only language improvement but also to be considered "as a means for achieving a non-linguistic purpose" (Nutall 1982:19). As Williams (1984: 4) points out, the role of reading is different depending on the reader and text language. For the native reader, language helps him in learning to read. Conversely, for the foreign reader, reading leads him to learn language. Thus, reading materials that promote language learning and reading for authentic purposes are powerful tools in the foreign language class.

Considering the relevance of terms used in reading literature it is necessary to present some definitions given by Wallace,

- Bottom-up processing: ways of reading texts which attend to linguistic forms at the level of words or sentences.
- Schema: a mental model which we use to relate new to already known information. We do this in ways which are socioculturally influenced.
- Strategies: ways of reading which are employed flexibly and selectively and which vary depending on the text-type, and the context and purpose of reading; a strategy approach to teaching reading is concerned with the ways in which the reader processes the text.
- Top-down processing: ways of reading texts which attend to global meaning and are activated largely by existing knowledge of the world rather than specific linguistic features of the text.

(1992:145-7)

Pointing out the importance of reading in foreign language, it is relevant to present the different models of reading that have been influenced reading instruction. The bottom-up view of reading process, developed by Gough (1972 in Davies 1995: 59), involves basically decoding, in a process that goes from identification of letters, sounds of the letters, to sentences and finally to meaning and thinking. In contrast, within the theoretical frame of psycholinguistics top-down reading processes have been developed in which prediction and confirmation are emphasized and visual decoding becomes only "the recognition of a graphic display as written language" (Smith 1971, 1973 and Goodman 1969, 1970, 1975 and 1985 in Davis 1995: 61). Based on studies of beginning readers in the first language, Goodman proposed the already well known 'psycholinguistic guessing game' in which anticipation and prediction play the central role, paying less attention to visual features. In this context, top-down models are useful for explaining reading in beginners without expertise in word recognition. However, they do not efficiently describe proficient reading performance (Samuels and Kamil 1988: 32).

The psycholinguistic model of reading has become the most popular view of reading in English language teaching. In this approach, reading is 'a psycholinguistic guessing game' which is similar with that proposed by Smith in which reading is defined as "the reduction of uncertainty" (Goodman 1967 in Wallace 1992: 39-40). Reading in this model is related to select strategies depending on reader purpose, text-type and context. The reader interprets, constructs, and reconstructs the meaning of the text via a series of hypotheses that, through the reading process, are confirmed or contradicted by the reader and then new hypotheses are set out and so forth. According to this reading model,

...this is done on every cognitive level, including an optical cycle, so that readers do not have to decode every letter or word: instead, they reconstruct the text according to the graphic cues they have sampled, aided by knowledge of the language and its redundancy rules.
    Paran 1996: 25

However, scholars such as Eskey (1988 in Paran 1996:27, Wallace 1992: 42) remarks the importance to attend bottom up processes. When attention is given to the graphophonic and syntactic features of the text instead of the top-down process, that is schematic knowledge, which is utilized in the Goodman's approach for reading and that has been extensively used in the foreign language classroom. Bottom up process is recommended based on the limited linguistic competence of the readers of second language, which makes difficult to take advantage of the contextual cues that the native language readers or advanced language learners use.

Research has shown that good readers are not related to the ability to guess rather to their ability to decode. In such studies good readers demonstrated that they did not depend on contextual cues instead, they decoded faster. In fact, although they were aware of context, they did not need it for reading (Paran 1996 and Wallace 1992). This leads to assume that this is the result of learning to read. Results of this research did not state the level of language proficiency of the "good readers". When reading is incorporated in a language course it is done with the purpose of promoting effective reading. Less use of context and fast decoding is not only a result of reading instruction through the use of a series of different strategies but also it is related to the knowledge level of the language.

A reconciliatory approach that takes into account both, the top-down and bottom up processes, is introduced as an interactive model of reading. The reader in this model interacts and constructs the meaning of the text using different strategies. Interaction occurs when in the reading process the bottom-up and the top-down processes are present as complementary and compensatory. The 'physical page' of the text with its words and sentences supports and is supported by the prior knowledge of the content or the text type, "readers attend to what is on the page, as well as to what is in their minds" (Moran and Williams 1993:65). In a same vein, Paran (1996: 25-34) in *Reading in EFL: facts or fictions* points out the importance of visual input in reading, stressing the relevance of the bottom up view of reading process as a result of research. Since, the strength of the top-down reading approach has been overemphasized, good readers, according to him, do not depend only on prediction and testing hypotheses but also, on word recognition. As Eskey and Grabe put it,

Words seem to have a status in language skin to that of molecules in physical structures and good readers become remarkably adept at recognizing thousands of them at a glance.
    1988:232

Rumelhart (1977, 1984 in Samuel and Kamil 1988:27-31, and Davis 1995:63-6) introduced the interactive model whose objective "was to propose an alternative to serial, bottom-up models by incorporating the possibility of 'parallel processing', that is the simultaneous processing of information from more than one source". This model incorporates identification of a letter depending on the word it appears, identification of the word determined by the semantic and syntactic context where it appears, and at same time the text is interpreted according to the schematic context in which is presented. Thus, as Rumelhart puts it, reading is a process in which sensory, semantic and pragmatic information are involved.

According to Eskey and Eskey and Grabe (1988), the interactive model does not underline the top-down reading process, in which educated guessing based on few visual hints substitutes progressively the tortuous word by word decoding. Instead, it proposes a continual interaction between the top-down and bottom-up processes. Each contributes to reconstruct the meaning of the text. "In this view, good readers are both good decoders and good interpreters of texts, their decoding skills becoming more automatic but not less important as their reading skill develops" (Eskey 1988:94). Both bottom-up recognition abilities and top-down interpretation procedures must be encouraged concurrently for the developing reader. Accuracy and fluency in reading result from this interaction which meets the needs that the reading process requires.

As a development of his interactive model, Rumelhart (1984 in Davis 1995:66) proposes the 'schema theory' model. Schema as a "unit of knowledge" gives a frame of reference to interpret the world and, for the reading purposes, the world of the text. This model is based on the assumption that visual information and words can be interpreted in the light of relating these to our prior knowledge and experience; and that prior knowledge and that experience embodied an unlimited number of general as well as specific units of knowledge or schemata. An individual's schemata are in permanent modification since it may change over time and with experience.

Bartlett (1932 in Anderson and Pearson 1988: 39), the first scholar to use the term schema refers to it as "an active organization of past reactions, or past experience". For schema theory reading is an interactive process because comprehension is given thanks to the interaction between the

reader's background knowledge and the text. Moreover, the relevance of schema in reading is based on the premise in which the interpretation of a text is due to the background or schematic knowledge of the reader not only to the text itself (Carrell and Eisterhold 1988:79, Reid 1993: 39-41).

Widdowson (1990: 103), who explains that the need for extending the schematic knowledge promotes the acquisition of language, points out the value of schema in language learning. To meet such a need allows participating in a more effective way in the world we live in, also social networks become wider. Language then, is a wanted means for achieving a profitable end. Similarly, Nutall (1982) found that language learning is related to non-linguistic content rather than language content itself. Widdowson recommends that a key question in designing a language course is that of "What do we need to teach that will stimulate the learning of language?" He argues that in order to succeed in language teaching it is necessary to consider content other than language itself since students will recognize this as a worthwhile process for extending their schema.

Schema or schemata are defined as "cognitive constructs which allow for the organization of information in long-term memory" (Widdowson 1983 in Wallace 1992:33) and for Cook (1989 in Wallace 1992: 33) "the mind, stimulated by key words or phrases in the text or by the context, activates a knowledge schema". The known information paves the incoming new knowledge and what it is known as knowledge of the world serves for this purpose. The relationship between the new information and the old one is what is named comprehension (Anderson and Pearson 1988:37). Schemata not only help to organize knowledge but also encourage prediction of what is next in the text. The beginning of the text stimulates a schema and while the text is reading such a schema it is confirmed or refuted. Reading texts with familiarized content and its way of organization facilitates reading process as Widdowson puts it,

> ...the act of reading does not involve so much the accumulation of new knowledge as the *confirmation* of predictions based on what is already known. We bring to reading, as we do to all experience of language use, what Frank Smith calls 'the theory of the world in the head'...and this theory leads us to set up hypotheses, or in my terms schematic projections, to be tested as further information comes in from the discourse process.

> (1983: 61)

Most approaches in reading take for granted what the reader brings to the text, related to the knowledge of the topic, reading strategies and also reading purposes. Schema then, is a powerful source for reading. It describes what the reader knows about the topic of the reading whose content may be about an academic subject or sports. That stored knowledge

is what is known as content schemata. When the reader detects that the text is a newspaper article or a scientific article that knowledge the reader brings is what is named as formal schemata. Thanks to it the reader knows how particular texts are typically organized (Carrell 1983b in Carrell and Eisterhold 1988: 79 and Moran and Williams 1993:66). However, Davis (1995:68) points out that evidence has demonstrated that different sources of information interact each other in different ways and can not be possible to establish clearly such distinction of schema as is pointed out by Carrell (1983b, 1984, 1987 in Davis 1995). Moreover, this supports the Rumelhart viewpoint about the constant modification of schemata.

> The reader needs to bring together linguistic knowledge, for example knowledge of how texts are constructed, and familiarity with the discourses within a text, to draw upon a relevant schema.

> Wallace 1992:37

To overcome the conflict between using top-down and bottom up view of reading or the weight of each in the reading process in the EFL course, it is important to consider what Widdowson (1990: 163) refers as systematic and schematic knowledge with regard to communicative approaches which can be pertinent to reading. In language use, the process of expressing and interpreting meanings involves two types of knowledge. On one hand, the knowledge of the formal properties of the language such as semantics and syntax, meaning of the words and their combination for forming sentences embodied systematic knowledge. On the other one, schematic knowledge is referred to the knowledge of the world we are related to. Concepts, beliefs, cultural values, etc. are included in this sort of knowledge. Both types of knowledge serve as a point of reference for constructing meanings through the use of language. Systematic knowledge, in 'natural use of language' is not an end itself but rather it becomes a means for carrying meanings. When the schematic knowledge is incomplete; knowledge of the language, that is systematic knowledge, works as back up for understanding the meanings. For the native speaker then, systematic knowledge is used as a communicative resource.

However, controversial debate is aroused about reading and the role that language plays in this process for non-native readers. To what extent reading can be considered "a reading problem or a language problem" (Alderson 1984 in Moran and Williams 1993:67). On one hand, reading theory recently is underlining the importance of giving more attention to language knowledge for getting information from a text. On the other, background knowledge, namely schemata, and reading strategies used in the first language become the way for compensating limited second language proficiency. Nunan (1984 in Nunan 1989: 33) detected that pertinent

background knowledge was a main factor in reading comprehension rather than grammar complexity for high school students of English as a second language.

It is argued that considering reading only as 'a psycholinguisic guessing game' for foreign language learners, this promotes the conception that lack of language proficiency can be easily overcome. This is a questionable view for language learning. Although guessing seems to be a valid strategy, this can not compensate limitations in the knowledge of the language, mainly in the vocabulary area, since it has been demonstrated that in many cases only few word meanings are guessed from their context. Moran and Williams (1993: 67) conclude, "good readers typically do not guess. They have large vocabularies and automatic word recognition". The importance of how reading is perceived in the language course, leads to consider reading as a speculation process or as linguistic one. That is why it could be worthy not to focus exclusively on top-down reading process, but also on language structure of texts, as is being incorporating in recent reading materials.

FEATURES OF THE SYLLABUS
A brief description of the EFL course in high school

The general objective of the English course in high school of the *Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* is to develop reading skills in order to obtain and use information from English written texts. The program is formed by two, 80 hours each, courses. Among the principal features of the course are,

- English as a Foreign Language -EFL.
- Focus on reading comprehension through which the student develops the necessary skills for obtaining information from written texts.
- Grammar, finding and organization of information, and communicative practice derived from the exploitation of authentic written texts.
- Students are encouraged to participate in an active way in the process of learning.
- Diverse methodological and didactic tools are used in order to evaluate the learning process.
- Performance, in teams, of tasks oriented towards developing reading comprehension skills
- Problem-solving as a resource for learning.

Munguía *et al.* 1993

Reading comprehension as the main goal of the course is among the relevant features as well as the task oriented and group activity for the pedagogical implications are brought into language classroom. As the textbook's writers (Munguía *et al.* 1993) claim the textbook sets up tasks that develop critical thinking skills such as classifying and sequencing, and

then applies these skills to language study. This leads to more effective learning. With regard to the student participation in the language learning process, this textbook underlies the idea that students take responsibility for their own learning, since more students are involved in the learning process, they become more motivated. For this reason students are encouraged to use a variety of reading strategies including, prior knowledge, skimming, scanning for specific information, guessing meaning from context, using cognates, using outside resources (magazines, TV and radio programs, etc.). These strategies seek to help students to be more aware of their own learning styles and to become familiar with the new ones.

Pair and group work are presented as key features among the general teaching techniques and activities offered in the textbook according to its teacher's guide (Munguía *et al*. 1993). Pair work means that student-talking time is increased, since each group has nearly forty students, and students can do extensive practice in the short time the class lasts. While reading they can exchange not only opinions but also hints about particular reading and learning strategies. The promotion of group work seeks to provide an opportunity for students to talk with more confidence in an informal setting. It is also a way to activate the students' schemata, and 'standardize' the different students' backgrounds and then the whole class will be able to face the different activities derived from reading, besides considering a worthy educationally practice that encourages cooperation.

Four sections through eight units in each of the two courses are given in the high school English syllabus. First the topic: *Time to Read!* In which topics are introduced through authentic texts in order to help students become aware of reading strategies and different types of texts. Second, *Skill*: In which a specific reading skill is presented. Third, *Clearing it up*: It presents language structure and how it functions. Last, *Words at work*, which seeks to develop vocabulary, an important resource for reading.

This syllabus tries to cover topics of general interest, but seeking to give information of interest to high school students in order to get them involved in interactive reading. Taking into account that the use of real language develops student' self-confidence in their reading ability, most reading material is authentic, nearly 80%. Authentic material permits students to reflect on the structure and use of language at its own place. Its value in the foreign language class is based on that it was written for native speakers and that it was written with an authentic communicative objective that is, to persuade, to inform, to explain, etc. (Swaffar 1985: 17). For this reason advertisements, signs notices, brochures, newspaper and magazines articles have been included.

There are two reasons for selecting and designing a topic-base language syllabus: The first is concerning with educational motives. According to Abbott (1987 cited by White 1988: 65), who argues that students learn through English, and by means of this focus students in the English content can involve with other sections of the school curriculum. In other words Abbott refers to this as an opportunity for "learning the language through exposure to content." Hence, it is assumed that English language becomes itself a means and an end at the same time, as a result an educational value is given. The second reason that favors the use of topic-based syllabus, White (1988: 66) adds, is that referring to motivation. Even only some information content is related to other areas of the curriculum, the plethora of covered topics, tries to capture students attention in issues from trivial ones, but interesting for them (i.e., movie stars biodata), to social and controversial issues (i.e., political, social matters). This leads to learn English while information from different issues is obtained.

The idea of authenticity generates controversy since it has been considered that texts, which appear outside their original 'environment' and enter to a classroom for pedagogic reasons lost their identity of 'authentic' (Meinhof in Wallace 1992: 79). However, in this syllabus, English becomes a means for getting information from real world with topics that seeks to provide not only interesting content but also to develop linguistic competence. The guided principle for the selection of texts was that they conveyed a message for the reader. This leads to consider the challenged view of authenticity that Widdowson and Breen (in Wallace 1992:81) propose, since in this view authentic reading is in essence interactive and authenticity does not relate only to the text itself but in the interaction between the reader and the text. The text is reconstructed each time that is read according to the reader purposes. The classroom then, is as genuine as any other context for reading any text, an authentic or one specially written for the language class. In the language classroom the task is to allow students to have access to the context of situation of the text and to its content in order to promote interactive reading (Wallace 1992).

To conclude, the reading material of this textbook seeks that reading passages be of real interest and as authentic as possible regarding the level, be well presented and accompanied by purposeful activities. This will lead to reading with 'understanding' and enjoyment as is recommended by Cunningsworth (1995: 73). Taking into account the viewpoint of language as a social phenomenon, authentic texts with their type sizes, drawings, typefaces of print and writings help learners to be aware of "what has stimulated the communicative event and what its purpose is" (Dendrinos 1992).

With the purpose to give a context, the reading material which embodies the *Time to read!* section of the English Course in high school is presented as follows,

English Course 1
Unit 1 -Topic: Current Issues
Readings: Environment, Acid Rain, History of Computation, The Success of the PC

Unit 2 -Topic: Wonders: Natural and Man-Made
Readings: The River Nile, Niagara Falls, Taj Mahal at Agra, India, United Nations Headquarters

Unit 3 -Topic: Famous People
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Julia Roberts

Unit 4 -Topic: Science World
Readings: Chemical Elements, Genetics, Light and Radiation

Unit 5 -Topic: Health Care
Readings: Test your Fitness Level, Managing Stress, Tell us what you think: Should people have the *right* to smoke? This is what you thought: Are we taking antismoking measures too far? Vitamins and Minerals

Unit 6 -Topic: Jobs
Readings: Parents' ruling on job irks teen-agers, Children who work, Marketplace, Dallas News Classifieds

Unit 7 -Topic: Natural Phenomena

English Course 2
Unit 1 -Topic: The Arts
Readings: P. S. High -Tech Art Material, The Art of Making Videos, The Kahlo Cult, Digital Museum, now?

Unit 2 -Topic: Space Technology
Readings: What was the World Like?, The Moon: Luna Landers, Telescope for Hire, Making Space Affordable

Unit 3 -Topic: Me and Them
Readings: Fashion, Tracy Gold, Child of War, Bodyline: She Gets her Kicks

Unit 4 -Topic: Love
Readings: Somewhere I have never Traveled, High - Tech Romance

Unit 5 -Topic: The Future
Readings: Water: Raising Source of Violence, Customer Service Emerges as Profession, Responsibility for the Future, Careers: Management for the year 2000 and Beyond

Unit 6 -Topic: Achievements
Readings: What Makes a Great School?, How to Land a Job, Talk about Initiative, For this "Hall of Framer", Success Knows no Bounds

Unit 7 -Topic: History
Readings: Coke, The Beginning of Costumes, Corn Flakes, Jeans

Readings: The Changing Face of the Earth, Old Faithful, Cooper Canyon

Unit 8 -Topic: Marketing
Readings: Advertising and the Marketing Mix, Products, The New York Hotel Guide

Unit 8 -Topic: Trends
Readings: Debate about US and Iraq, Hot Dates in South African History, New Victim in South Africa: The Ecology, Watch-Advertisement.

Taken from Mungía et al. 1993, 1995

The reading tasks in each text are developed in three sections, pre-reading, while reading, and post- reading. These link prior knowledge of the topic, current knowledge of the language, and unaware reading strategies with those, with a specific purpose, developed in class. Reading in the EFL course must include those activities that allow the readers put into practice the use of the context and knowledge of the world.

The pre-reading phase introduces the topic, it seeks to stimulate the student's previous knowledge of the topic presented in the text (the student's schemata), or introduces some language activities in order to be prepared for interpreting the text. The while-reading phase aims to help students to understand the structure and content of the text. The post-reading activities attempt to relate the text to the students' own reality, involving their opinions about what has been read. Students 'personalize' the text content through post reading activities (Munguía *et al.*1993).

With regard to if the goals of the course meet the program and students' needs, this textbook's aims and objectives fit with those of the syllabus. Both, syllabus and textbook were designed by a high school English academic committee (where I work) in order to meet local needs. Students' needs were detected by a survey about English proficiency requirements of the different schools of the university. Most students when they finish high school, go to such schools for pursuing higher studies. As a result, reading for getting information from written texts was detected as the need. The topic-based syllabus focused on reading becomes the means to meet such a need. Reading then, is considered an exceptional resource for learning and use of the language. In this syllabus information content becomes the principle in which syllabus content is organized (Cunningsworth 1995: 58). Student's attention is on the information provided by the text rather than in the language itself. Independently of the opportunity that such sort of syllabus gives for promoting educational values, through different and interesting topics as an instrument for developing critical thinking in university students.

TEACHING MATERIALS IN THE READING EFL COURSE

An example

In order to design and implement materials for an EFL course informed decisions must be made. On one hand, Wallace (1992:42-3) presents a sensible view for assisting second language readers, that is text, context and reading task would be presented in such a way that readers can overcome their current linguistic knowledge and activate also their schematic knowledge. In order to interact successfully with the text the second language reader needs to have access to the content and to the context. Wallace (1992:86) proposes to link students existing schematic knowledge to the text they are reading through pre-, while- and post-reading activities. On the other hand, Eskey and Grabe (1988: 231), Paran (1996:30) and Moran and Williams (1993: 67) propose to develop vocabulary and automaticity of word recognition because the relevance of visual input in bottom up processing has been found. Good readers decode faster.

Based on this view is that the present paper seeks to examine a sample of the section *Time to read!*, of Unit 1 of the English textbook of the second course. The objective of the unit is that the learner will be able to use the stated or implied information in the text in order to infer ideas of a text. It is important to mention that students are not in groups according to their English level. Instead, they form high school groups without regarding English level of proficiency. High beginners, low intermediate and even some advanced English level students can be in a single group!

With the purpose to examine if the reading section helps students to have access to the content according to Wallace's terms, i.e. throughout pre-, while- and post-reading activities. A sample of material developed by myself for *Time to read*! of Unit 1, of the second English course, is presented as follows.

The Three stages in the reading section of the high school textbook

Pre-reading

Pre reading activities help to get an idea of the content and the tone of the text, to detect if the text deserves to be read and what strategies are needed for reading that text. The activities included in this section seek to make more efficient readers and give support to understand in a better way the

foreign language written text (Crandall 1995: 89). The main asset of these activities is that they help students to activate their prior knowledge that is, what he knows of the topic, to the text genre and for expanding the prior knowledge when students are working together in teams. The latter leads to build a common schema in the classroom, which is important, when there are students with different backgrounds. Also, it is recommended by Moran and Williams (1990) the fruitfulness of carrying out the pre-reading activities in groups to stimulate discussions and exchange information. This way, it is possible to level the pervious knowledge that is necessary to face the common text presented in class. An important outcome of using these types of activities is that it avoids word by word reading.

Research evidence has demonstrated that the existing knowledge, that is to say, schema, helps to understand texts in a second language. However, in a typical high school English as a foreign language course, topics and interests are diverse and knowledge specialization is not achieved yet, this can be overcome through the pre-reading activities. Moran and Williams (1993) explain the purpose of pre-reading activities as those for eliciting the existing information, factual or personal, depending on the text and the activities. This argument is supported by that proposed by Carrell (1988:105) about the relevance of activating schema. That is, schema by itself is not a condition for comprehension. Pre-reading activities for Wallace (1992:86) are useful not only for compensating insufficient linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, but also as a way to activate background knowledge.

The following is the pre-reading task proposed for the reading text of Frida Kahlo. See the 'content page' reading in the appendix in order to answer this task.

Pre-reading task

On what pages would you expect to find an answer to the following questions?

Are there any books on art and artists for children? _____
What is new in the art world in México? _____
Who's who in México about art collection? _____
What does Frida Kahlo and women's liberation in the 70's have in common? _____
How has a changing world been photographed? _____

This reading material belongs to the unit named *The Arts*. It is the third reading section of unit 1 of the second English course. The questions presented in the pre-reading phase, as a scanning task, look for content and genre as sources for activating students' schema. Since it is a content page, scanning is considered the natural reading strategy for approaching the text and locates specific information. The purpose is to familiarize students to use a content table, as a point of reference for anticipation and scanning in reading process (Grellet 1981). The original page is kept in order to give the 'natural' context of the text. The purpose is to activate schematic knowledge formal as well as content. Also, it is presented to prepare students for what is coming next, that is, an invitation for the 'reader' to read about Frida Kahlo, which is the text which follows in the while-reading section. I selected this text, from a North American art magazine because it presents art issues related to México and Frida Kahlo. She is a famous Mexican artist among young people not only because of her artistic work but also for her interesting life. Also, students can realize how Mexican people have a presence for instance, in art, in an international scenario.

It is important to point out the relevance of pre-reading activities in the frame of interactive reading process. Its role is decisive since this reading view is related to the schema theory and its key feature is the activation of schema. The main job of pre-reading is to activate the existing schema in the reader. Even pre-reading activities seem to be too obvious in the language textbook as an uncommon way to start reading an article, they are explicit valuable procedures for introducing a topic. This with the purpose of setting a 'mental' environment that suits, to some extent, with the content of the reading material. They occur in a 'natural' setting that is, in every day situations as a tool for being prepared to face the content of every day reading. The difference is that these pre-reading activities are carried out without awareness. Pre-reading also tries to motivate and arouse interest for the topic of the reading.

The following are the while-reading tasks proposed for the reading text of Frida Kahlo.

While-reading tasks

Task 1
Read the following text as quickly as you can and tick the right completion.

The text is about...

____*Art marketing through the selling of T-shirts, clocks, pins, posters, etc.*
____*How a female painter has attracted a big group of followers for the last*

two decades.

____ *How life and artistic works of an unknown artist became famous all around the world because of a bus accident.*

____ *The members of a religion founded by a Mexican artist.*

The text probably comes from...

____ *a weekly newspaper*
____ *a specialized magazine*
____ *an art book*
____ *a Mexican art brochure*

Task 2

*Mark these statements **T** (True) or **F** (False) according to the information of the text. Underline the sentence(s) on which you based your answer.*

Kahlo's self-portraits are well known all around the world. ____
Frida Kahlo's house became a museum. ____
Kahlo's biographies are written only in Spanish. ____
Many people admire Frida Kahlo. ____
Frida Kahlo was born in 1954. ____
Nowadays, Kahlo's works are high-valued. ____
"Casa Azul" is a Kahlo's painting. ____

Check your answers with a partner

The while-reading activities as they are named occur with the text to be interpreted. The aim of these reading activities is "to encourage learners to be flexible, active, and reflective readers" (Wallace 1992:93). This section encourages students develop strategies that skilled readers use. Reader's purpose, text-type, and context are basis for an effective reader to select strategies. The while-reading section attempts to prepare students through different reading strategies to process information of texts. These strategies are included to take advantage of the context of the text as well as of the textual cues as sources of information for predicting and to minimize uncertainty in the reading.

This section attempts to prepare students for effective reading in the same terms as Wallace (1992:42) puts it, predicting and sampling with selectivity of the visual cues, taking only the ones relevant to the prediction, accompanied by "the ability and willingness to reflect" which leads to effective reading. With this aim in mind is that a dialogue between the writer and the reader is promoted through the while-reading activities. Texts do not embody meaning by themselves. Instead, they have "potential for meaning". Such potential only can be accomplished when writer and reader

interact. While reading meaning is created as the reader uses both the linguistic and schematic knowledge and the input offered by the text (Wallace 1992:39).

Task 1 looks for providing a general understanding of the text in order to prepare students to smaller units of information such as paragraphs, sentences and words. It gives a context for understanding more specific information of the text (Williams 1984:39). Also, the second part of the task seeks to activate the formal schemata. It gives a context about the origin of the text, that is, an article from a specialized magazine. This leads students to detect how this sort of text is typically organized (Carrell 1983b in Carrell and Eisterhold 1988: 79 and Moran and Williams 1993:66).

In Task 2, students are asked to answer, by inferring, if each statement is true or false according to the text. Also, in order to go deeper in the text, students have to justify each answer by underlining in the text the information on which they based their answers. Then, seeking to encourage communication and discussion among peers it is asked they to check the answers with a partner. As an extension, which is not included in the task, students are asked to rewrite correctly the false statements. Also, for writing purposes students can write a composition guided by the seven true statements given.

Post-reading task

Write a report on Frida Kahlo. You can make inquirings at Marco or Museo de Monterrey.

In this textbook post-reading activity promotes to bring into the real situation of the student what has been read in the text. This could be performed by means of discussion, expressing personal opinions, carrying out a project, a bulletin board, a poster etc. The purpose is to do something with or related to the information provided by the text. Doing this, students are 'closer' to the text and reading becomes a purposeful activity. Besides, activities such as writing and speaking are encouraged with a meaningful purpose.

For example, in this post-reading activity students are asked to go to one of the museums of the city in order to get information about Frida Kahlo's life and her artistic work. They can be organized by teams or individually. Students report to the class what they found in the museum as a result of an interview or visiting the museum's library. When there is an exhibition of Kahlo's paintings this activity is much better. Also, in order to relate this

text with the previous one presented in this unit, named *The Art of Making Videos,* students are asked to make a video in their visit to the museum. By teams, they present in class what they decided to video the current museum exhibition or the interview asking for Frida Kahlo data.

Broadly speaking, in this section students are encouraged to work without a teacher's direct supervision, they work by themselves, as an opportunity for relating text information to their own reality. This leads to consider this activity valuable as an educational resource not only in the language area, but it is also enjoyed by the students because this activity is not controlled by the teacher. Students work freely and according to their own view as a result of the information given by the text.

Also, in this phase students develop critical thinking. Since the post-reading activity works as a space for exercising free expression, it is an opportunity for the students to give their viewpoint related to the topic of the text. It is assumed that it is in this phase, including the issues of certain readings, where the English course meets educational purposes and reflects what is understood for education in the wider sense of the word.

Word Recognition Exercises
-A proposal for the High School English Textbook

A useful result of the overview presented previously, about reading in the EFL course, is related to the certain characteristics that the native language readers or advanced language learners own that lead them to be effective readers. These characteristics are not exclusively based on approaching a text from attending its global meaning by activating the existing knowledge of the world. Nor in reading texts attending just to linguistic forms of the text at the level of words or sentences, since both reading processes are recommended as complementary and compensatory in the interactive view of reading. Instead, the found characteristic refers to decode faster through gaining automaticity in word recognition, a specific application of the bottom-up process, a neglected area in this textbook.

In this English textbook, both reading processes are incorporated in order to help students to compensate their restricted knowledge of the English language. Grammar and vocabulary accompany the reading section. They attempt to support the reading process and to strengthen language learning. Their tasks are derived from the reading material which works as a resource for language learning. Grammar and vocabulary are presented in the context of the text to support reading and, at the same time, be supported by it in this English textbook (see an example of grammar and vocabulary exercises in

appendix). However, word recognition exercises focusing on improving reading have never been included.

> Good readers know the language. They can decode, with occasional exceptions, both the lexical units and syntactic structures, they encounter in texts, and they do so, for the most part, not by guessing from context or prior knowledge of the world, but by a kind of automatic identification that requires no conscious effort.
>
> Eskey 1988 in Paran 1996:30

Knowing vocabulary does not guarantee that the reading process is done quickly and efficiently. That is, the reader can know the meaning of a word or a set of words but, he or she can not recognize them immediately while reading. This complication decreases students' opportunities of interpreting the text since cognitive and perceptual dimensions are involved. The reader must not only know the meaning of the word or words but also the reader must recognize the visual forms of those words (Eskey and Grabe 1988:232).

Automaticity of word recognition can be developed by extensive reading, which must be encouraged, since we learn to read by reading. Also, there are exercises that encourage and develop automatic process (Eskey and Grabe 1988:232-4 and Paran 1996: 30). Lack of variety and to be frequently considered only for beginning students are limitations that this type of exercises presents. Nonetheless, they are recommended to use throughout the learning process, advanced students included. Examples of word recognition exercises are as follows,

Word recognition (timed exercise)

In each exercise, circle the word (or words) which exactly matches those printed in bold.

1. **ensure**
a. insure   b. sure   c. insurance   d. ensure
2. **on board**
a. aboard   b. abroad   c. on board   d. a board
3. **superstitious**
a. superstition   b. superstitious   c. superstitions   d. surreptitious
4. **applies**
a. applied   b. apples   c. applies   d. apple
5. **omen**
a. men   b. omen   c. omens   d. amen

6. extremely

a. extremely b. extremity c. extreme d. Extremes

<div align="center">Taken from Paran 1996:31</div>

Advanced word recognition exercise

Word recognition (timed exercise)

automated: automatic **automating** automated automation automatic autonomous

revolutionised: revolutionized revolutionize revolutionary revolutionizes revolutionised

assembled: assemble assembled assembly *assembled* assemble *assembled*

emphasis: emphasize emphatic emphasis emphasize empathize

experimental: experimentally experiment experimental **experimented** experimental

constructed: construction constructive constructed construction construct

electronics: electrics electric electronic electricity electronics

audible: audible *audio-visual* audible auditory audit audition audible

modules: modular **modality** module modules module **modular**

televideo: telephone television telecom televideo televised

<div align="center">Taken from Paran 1996:32</div>

Paran (1996:32) points outs that although this type of exercises is restricted in diversity and they are not very popular; they are effective for promoting automaticity. Since it is considered for the most elementary level of reading, advanced students can consider them as useless. However, according to Paran, research has found that word recognition in advanced bilinguals is less automatic than in L1 readers. "This type of exercise should be used as much as possible, and extended throughout the learning process, even to advanced learners". Computers can be useful tools, for this purpose, since there are programs that help readers to gain automaticity, e.g. two words appear in order to detect if they are identical, as a form of game.

Variants of this type of exercise go from identifying a single word to match not only forms to forms, but also meanings to meanings or key words

to synonyms or antonyms. Also, there is the 'phrase identification' exercise which is the beginning for 'chunking', that is "reading in meaningful groups of words" as an advanced type of recognition level. This type of exercises is relevant for developing readers because while reading students can recognize that they can process English in meaningful phrases. Also, these exercises promote fast reading which is the key feature of good readers. In each fixation of their eyes, good readers process quickly chunks of meaningful discourse which leads them to construct the meaning of the text as an integral unit (Eskey and Grabe 1988:233). The following are examples of phrase recognition exercises,

Phrase recognition exercises

A. Key phrase: lazy day

crazy day
hazy day
cloudy day
lazy day
windy day
nasty day
lazy day

B. Key phrase: on the floor

on the book	in the flood
on the bay	in the blood
on the door	on the floor
in the door	on the door
on the floor	on the flower
in the lore	in the flour
in the flood	on the floor

C. Key phrase: drive a car

drive a truck	rent a car	drive cars
drive a bus	drive a car	car driver
dry a car	wash a car	drive a tractor
park a car	drive a truck	drive two cars
buy a car	buy a truck	drive a car
buy a bar	drive a bus	

<div align="center">Taken from Adams 1969 in Eskey and Grabe 1988:234</div>

An example of word recognition exercises for the reading text presented previously in this paper is as follows,

Phrase recognition (timed exercise)
-In the next exercise circles the key phrase or phrases.

Key phrase: classical music
modern music   classical artist
country music   common music
classical music   classical films
classical means   classical paintings
classical movie   classical music
classical museum   classical move

Word recognition (timed exercise)
In this exercise, circle the word (or words) which exactly matches those printed in bold.

microphone: microspore   microtone   macrophage   *microphone* microphage
instruction: institution instruction *insulation institutions* instructing
culture: cultivate *culture cultic* cultures *cultured*
obsolete: absolute *obsolete* obsolesce obsolete *obstacle*
interactive: intercalate interactive *interaction interact* interactions
overload: *overload overlord* overland *overlain* overleap
digitizing: digitalis *digitalize* digitized *digitalized* digitizing
painting: *paintings* painting   painted   painters *painterly*
available: available *avalanche availed avalanched* availability
visitors: visors vista*s* visits visitors *visitant visitor*

Consciousness raising, the identification of problem areas, and the breaking down of psychological obstacles to reading faster in English are among the purposes of these exercises. Also, they are useful tools for Spanish speakers to develop word recognition because the alphabet has different letter-sound value, for instance, in Spanish /j/ is in English /h/ (Eskey and Grabe 1988: 233-4). Hence, as a result of the review and analysis presented in this paper, it would suggest to add these exercises in the high school English textbooks of the *Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León* whose objective is to develop reading comprehension in second language learners. Although, it is recognized that only extensive reading can increase reading rate, it is recommended to devote word recognition exercises few minutes per class as timed exercises and as a complementary way to support the bottom-up process in an interactive reading model.

Since the English course in high school embodies two textbooks, the word recognition exercises will be developed in both of them in the reading section. Beginning from the easy ones to the more challenging ones as those proposed by Eskey and Grabe (1988) and Paran (1996). As it has been mentioned previously, each unit has a topic with three or four reading passages in the *Time to read!* section. Each reading text is worked with its corresponding grammar and vocabulary exercises. In each reading passage a word recognition exercise will be included formed by vocabulary of the previous reading text. Because these are timed exercises, students can record their performance of these exercises in order to detect to what extent they have increased their reading speed at the end of the course. Hence, the proposal is to add in both textbooks these exercises, even if they are simple exercises, they are an integral and progressive answer to strengthen the reading process of the English high school students.

Conclusion

Designing or selecting a textbook is a big responsibility, it is not an easy task. It underlies principles that will guide the learning process. The English textbook for high school of the UANL is developed by local teachers in order to meet local needs. The implementation of the interactive reading model was the recommendation of the EFL review presented in this paper. As the most sensible way to approach reading the interactive model, in which top-down and bottom-up processes are complementary and compensatory, should be taken into account in reading in a second language. As all in life, balance is the key. In the reading language course, the issue is to select if students need to do linguistic analysis for reading or speculation will serve as the basis for reading through playing a guessing game. In this paper a sample of the reading section *Time to read!* of a reading comprehension English textbook has been examined through its pre-, while- and post reading activities. Since these were presented as ways to access to content by means of relating schematic knowledge and the text, and trying to promote interactive reading.

Beginning readers need more contextual support for compensating their restricted language knowledge. In an intermediate level English class the goal is to provide contextual support and promote efficient decoding. As students become better readers, they must be able to depend less on context. Outside the classroom, readers face texts without any help, between reader and text there is no supporting context, neither specific tasks for activating schema, at least explicitly. However, texts with a context and activating schema are still relevant in advanced students in reading courses. Adopting an interactive reading model brings considerations in relation to curriculum, methods and materials. "The major virtue of the interactive model., however, is that it does direct our attention to both the top-down and bottom-up skills that fluent and accurate reading demands" (Eskey 1988:99).

Since the reading section of the examined textbook is developed in Wallace's terms, i.e. through pre-, while-, and post-reading activities in order to permit students to have access to the context and the content of the text as a way to overcome their restricted linguistic knowledge. Grammar and vocabulary are present in the textbook for reading and language learning purposes. A word recognition exercise is suggested to be included in the reading section to encourage fast decoding and strengthen reading learning process.

Of course, word recognition exercises do not pretend to substitute reading as the main means for developing identification skills. Practicing these exercises during few minutes of the class, along with the pre-, while- and post-reading activities, and the grammar and vocabulary exercises included, meet purposes for developing effective readers. Hence, by means of adding word recognition exercises, it is sought to strengthen the reading process of the English high school students. "In short, it is only this kind of local processing that allows for global reading with true comprehension" (Eskey and Grabe 1988: 236).

Word recognition exercises alone do not solve the challenge of reading in a second language. Vocabulary and grammar development seeks to enrich the course. There are no given recipes in language teaching. Up to now, the reading course has been satisfactory since it has been detected that students approach reading texts with more confidence and more enjoyment. Of course, there is still much to do. Informed decisions are necessary to guide the 'what' and the 'how' in textbooks. Theory, empirical studies and direct feedback from students and teachers must be taken into account to select appropriate reading passages, promote cooperative learning, design purposeful tasks, etc. in order to promote effective readers. This brief study has tried to be an example. By now, the task about adding word recognition exercises is accomplished as a manner to improve the English material. Results from the implementation of these exercises will show if betterment is achieved. Constant evaluation is required in designing or selecting a textbook due to its relevant role in the teaching-learning process.

> Textbook instruction constitutes as much as 90 per cent of instructional time.
> Woodward, Elliot and Nagel 1986 cited by Dendrinos 1992:24

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