Información Importante

La Universidad de La Sabana informa que el(los) autor(es) ha(n) autorizado a usuarios internos y externos de la institución a consultar el contenido de este documento a través del Catálogo en línea de la Biblioteca y el Repositorio Institucional en la página Web de la Biblioteca, así como en las redes de información del país y del exterior, con las cuales tenga convenio la Universidad de La Sabana.

Se permite la consulta a los usuarios interesados en el contenido de este documento, para todos los usos que tengan finalidad académica, nunca para usos comerciales, siempre y cuando mediante la correspondiente cita bibliográfica se le dé crédito al trabajo de grado y a su autor.

De conformidad con lo establecido en el artículo 30 de la Ley 23 de 1982 y el artículo 11 de la Decisión Andina 351 de 1993, La Universidad de La Sabana informa que los derechos sobre los documentos son propiedad de los autores y tienen sobre su obra, entre otros, los derechos morales a que hacen referencia los mencionados artículos.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Exploring Third Graders' Reading Comprehension through the Implementation of Tiered products for Differentiated Instruction

By: Nathaly Pasuy Pedroza

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master in English Language

Teaching –Autonomous Learning Environments

Directed by: Jenny Mendieta Aguilar

Master in English Language Teaching-Autonomous Learning Environments

Department of Foreign Languages and Culture

Universidad de la Sabana

Chia, 2013

Acknowledgments

First of all I would like to thank God for the wisdom and strength he has bestowed upon me during this master's program. I would also like to express my gratitude to professor Luz Dary Arias and my thesis director Jenny Mendieta Aguilar for their support, remarks and engagement through the development of this research project.

My deepest appreciation to the principal of the school and the participants, without their contribution and commitment this project would not have been materialized.

Finally, I would like to thank my loved ones, who have supported me throughout the entire process, and indeed, throughout my life.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Abstract

This qualitative action research study was carried out at a bilingual school with a sample of 17 elementary English language learners. The overall aim of this research project was to analyze the impact that the implementation of tiered products had on the reading comprehension process of the above-mentioned participants. Data gathered through the implementation emerged from participants' artifacts, semi-structured interviews and learning logs. The obtained findings indicate that the use of tiered products during reading instruction enhanced students' reading comprehension process by fostering their motivation towards reading and by helping them develop meaning-building skills such conceptualizing main ideas, and making connections with real life, and identifying the central message of the stories. These results allowed the researcher to conclude that the implementation of tiered products proved to be an effective strategy to foster reading comprehension skills and motivation, supporting the performance of students before, during, and after reading.

Key words: differentiated instruction, tiered products, reading comprehension, identification of main ideas.

Resumen

Este estudio cualitativo de investigación- acción fue llevado a cabo en un colegio bilingüe con un grupo de 17 estudiantes de primaria. El objetivo general de este estudio fue analizar el impacto que el uso de productos diferenciados tuvo en la comprensión lectora de los participantes mencionados anteriormente. Los datos recogidos durante la intervención provienen de artefactos de los participantes, entrevistas semi-estructuradas y diarios de aprendizaje. Los resultados obtenidos indican que el uso de productos diferenciados durante la instrucción lectora mejoran el proceso de comprensión de lectura mediante el fomento de la motivación hacia la lectura y el desarrollo de habilidades de construcción de sentido tales como la conceptualización de ideas principales y las conexiones con la vida para identificar el mensaje central de las historias. Estos resultados permitieron al investigador concluir que los productos diferenciados resultaron ser una estrategia eficaz para fomentar las destrezas de comprensión y motivación que apoyan el desempeño de los estudiantes antes, durante y después de la lectura.

Palabras clave: instrucción diferenciada, productos diferenciados, comprensión de lectura, identificación de ideas principales.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Table of Contents

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Chapter 1

Introduction

Throughout my job as an educator, it has been remarkable to realize that teaching involves more than an explanation, a book, some drills to practice and a test to grade students. This process rather entails the awareness of learners' weaknesses and strengths as well as the best strategies to enhance their learning process. In practice, when teaching a foreign language, many challenges emerge. In my own teaching practice, I have realized that one of the most demanding tasks is to teach learners how to read effectively. This skill has become a challenging ability to be developed in students as it requires efficient knowledge of the foreign language and high levels of comprehension surpassing the mere act of decoding words.

In essence, reading involves a comprehension process that goes beyond the understanding of isolated terms. According to MacNamara (2007), "…for some readers, comprehension is always challenging. They may understand each word separately, but linking them together into meaningful ideas often does not happen as it should" (p. 6).

The identification of the aforementioned issue was the origin of this research project and the main motive to conduct it. It is very common to find in today's classrooms, students who struggle with reading comprehension skills. What is more, students who struggle to read and comprehend what they read are often reluctant to participate in activities designed to improve their reading comprehension skills. Maybe, the instruction provided is not addressing these learners' reading needs.

Therefore, language teachers should adapt their instruction, making changes designed to meet the needs of different students. In other words, "teachers can no longer teach "the lesson" and hope that everyone gets it. Educators must consider each child based on his or her needs,

readiness, preferences, and interests" (Gregory & Chapman, 2007, p. 2). Definitely, it is the teacher's job to make of the classroom a place where the students can explore different strategies in order to succeed in their reading comprehension process.

Perhaps, this is one of the most challenging parts of teaching. How can you know that you are using the right tools for students to learn best? How can you guarantee your students are learning? As a teacher you need to know how to address a variety of diverse learning styles, preferences and backgrounds present in today's classrooms.

Learners perceive and process information in different ways; therefore, they approach learning distinctively. Many theories have been developed in order to shed some light on how to teach a language skill. For instance, the behaviorist theory of Skinner suggests that the emergence of language skills is a result of imitation and reinforcement. The CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) stresses social and situational contexts of communication as key elements in the development and integration of different language skills.The nativist theory of Noam Chomsky advises that children are born with a language acquisition device that allows them to produce language skills once they have learned the necessary vocabulary (Brown, 2009). However, these approaches have changed through time due to diverse learners' needs and conditions. Each person acquires knowledge at a different pace, with diverse learning strategies and motivated for varied reasons. In other words, individuals' learning styles guide the way they learn and change the way humans internally represent experiences and recall information (Reid, 1995). As such, instruction needs to be adjusted to cater for learner' diversity and classrooms must become differentiated and flexible spaces to ensure that all, struggling and advanced learners, grow as much as they possibly can each day, each week and throughout the year.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

As stated by Tomlinson (1999), "In a differentiated classroom, the teacher can fully fashion instruction around essential concepts, principles and skills of each subject" (p. 9). When teaching reading comprehension skills, a teacher should then consider effective instruction for all types of readers. His or her classroom may include: virtual nonreaders, typically developing readers, and students who read at higher levels (Gregory & Chapman 2007). No matter how old the learners are or their proficiency level is, they will always depict various ways of learning which will involve the implementation of differentiated instruction.

Having detected the main phenomenon under study, it is now time to describe the problem being addressed and the rationale behind this research project.

Statement of the Problem

The experience of the researcher as an English teacher in third grade at Colegio Bilingue Buckingham drove her to pinpoint learners' comprehension difficulties when reading fiction texts and understand that this condition has substantially affected the students' reading performance.

Based on empirical observation, the researcher also realized that these third graders struggle with reading comprehension skills, especially with the identification of main ideas. In practice, when asked for the main idea, students tended to retell what a story was about or tended to confuse the main idea as the summary of a text. From a preliminary needs analysis, a questionnaire (See Appendix A) administered to 17 third graders aged between 8 and 11 years old at Colegio Bilingue Buckingham, the participants confirmed that identifying main ideas was a problematic task for them when facing a reading text. In addition, they also asserted that reading was the most difficult skill to learn.

Through this questionnaire, it was also possible to detect different learning profiles. For instance, some students preferred to work in pairs while others collectively. Some children

appeared to love fiction books whilst others preferred to read comic strips. When doing an activity, some of them preferred to have unlimited time to accomplish the assigned task and some others seemed not to care about it. Besides, some chose watching videos or making drawings as their favorite class activities. In other words, these learners step into the learning process with their own predispositions, uniqueness and ways of learning a language skill including their own learning styles and strategies.

As stated by Sadeghi (2012) in his research on learning preferences and reading comprehension performance "learning styles may have mediator/moderator effects between personality and learning achievements. Thus, in achieving reading goals, learning styles shape and help learning performance evolve" (p.119). Briefly put, learning styles are found to affect students' reading learning behaviors. Thus, an awareness of these learning differences by educators is essential for the most efficient use of reading materials and methodologies presented in the classroom.

It is important to highlight that the learner diversity found in this third grade classroom makes evident the need of providing differentiated instruction that maximized the potential of all the students and helped them enhance their reading comprehension skills.

Since learning preferences have been proved to be a key element when teaching and learning a language, it is essential to contemplate differentiated instruction as an opportunity to meet learners' different needs in the classroom. As such, the researcher considers that tiered products as a strategy derived from differentiation approach may serve the purpose of designing a reading comprehension intervention that facilitates the identification of main ideas when reading fiction texts allowing learners to demonstrate what they have come to know or learn according to

their interests and preferences. It means, teaching one concept and meeting the different learners'

needs in a group by creating different paths for learning (Adams, Pierce & Pierce, 2006).

Definitely, reading comprehension was an aspect that needed to be improved taking into

account that these learners had different interests, learning styles, and preferences to approach

their learning process.

Research Question:

After thoughtfully analyzing the results of the needs analysis and carefully considering the

empirical observations made by the researcher, the following research question emerged to

enclose the phenomenon under study and the focus of the research project:

What may the implementation of tiered products for differentiated instruction reveal

about third graders' identification of main ideas when reading fiction stories?

Research Objectives

The objectives of this research project aimed at finding out the possible connections

between the participants' identification of main ideas and tiered instruction, and determining any

perceptions that may arise from the implementation of tiered activities when reading and

identifying the main idea.

General objective:

To describe and document the relationship (if any) between third graders' identification of

main ideas and the implementation of tiered products.

Specific objective:

To identify third graders' perceptions towards the implementation of tiered products when

reading and identifying the main idea in fiction stories.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Justification / Rationale

Comprehension as the ultimate goal of reading turns to be a very difficult skill for children. The need of creating meaning from a text and understand its central purpose or gist is not an easy task. In effect, the participants of this study portrayed great difficulty identifying the main idea in fictional stories. In addition to this, as a mix- ability classroom, they needed different reading instruction that maximized their strengths and diminished their weaknesses.

Therefore, this research project aimed to explore third graders reading comprehension in terms of identification of main ideas through the implementation of tiered products for differentiated instruction. As pointed out by Benjamin (2003), "Differentiation strategies as tiered activities applied to reading can help students learn a range of skills including, phonics, comprehension, fluency, word prediction among others" (p. 45). Within such framework, the use of tiered products as a way to allow learners to demonstrate their understanding or mastery of a particular skill according to their learning styles or interests may benefit their reading comprehension process. Indeed, one of the purposes of differentiated teaching is to increase the quality of reading instruction to ensure effective support for learning to occur in classrooms (Gibson, 2011).

Taking into account what Gregory and Chapman (2007) assert, "One size doesn´t fit all" (p. 1), this project attempted to implement tiered instruction to address learners' particular needs for the improvement of their reading comprehension process. Moreover, this study also intended to give account of the students' perceptions towards the implementation of tiered instruction when identifying main ideas in fiction stories.

As noted above, one of the main reasons to carry out this study relied on the need of improving students' reading comprehension process. Likewise, this project may be regarded as a

possibility to enhance classroom methodologies. In fact, when teachers take into consideration students' preferences and needs to design and implement lesson plans, curricula and syllabi, they play an active part in the innovation process of the educational field.

The consideration of differentiated instruction as "a philosophy that enables educators to plan strategically in order to reach the needs of the diverse learners in the classrooms today to achieve targeted standards" (Gregory & Chapman, 2007 as cited in Chapman & King, 2009) implies that when implementing differentiated strategies in the classroom, educators are not only benefiting students learning process but also are reflecting upon their teaching practice.

Another reason to conduct this study was the connection it had with the philosophy and curriculum of the research setting. This school, as a bilingual institution certified and principled by the tenets of the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO), contemplates differentiated instruction as a valuable approach to cater for learners' needs and to foster motivation and inquiry in the classrooms.

According to the IBO (2002), "students who belong to their program in language B (foreign language) should develop a set of reading skills to accurately extract information and ideas from different types of texts distinguishing key points and supporting details" (IBO, 2002. p. 17). From this perspective, learners at Buckingham school need to develop a satisfactory reading comprehension level and teachers must provide the appropriate strategies to do so. Thus, the development of this study approached specific concerns of the institution, nurturing its principles and beliefs and assisting third graders in the enhancement of their reading comprehension process.

In regards to the educational impact, this study may generate new insights about children's reading process and provide an understanding of differentiated strategies in elementary

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

classrooms. What is more, educators may find a different view of reading comprehension based on differentiation that may serve as a basis for re-conceptualizing their current strategies of instruction. In fact, grasping the role that a tiered product has in the reading comprehension process may enable teachers to identify why some readers may fail to comprehend a text and how to overcome reading difficulties.

Since most of the research on reading comprehension has been carried out in L1 and apparently replicated for L2 reading comprehension instruction, it is necessary to provide the English Language Teaching community with insights on how pre-, while and post- reading comprehension activities based on the differentiation approach may foster the development of reading comprehension skills in young learners (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

Similarly, students may benefit from this project by recognizing their learning styles, participating actively in learning, producing and assessing their own reading comprehension process. As described by Chapman and King (2009), "Differentiation shows respect for each reader´s learning differences. Everyone has different experiences and brings varied emotions to each learning situation. Not only does the reader have to possess the desire to learn, the individual has to be ready for information, understand the learning purpose, and make it fit his or her unique mind" (p. 7).

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework

In the introductory chapter, an overview of the problematic situation was stated including a research question, a rationale and some objectives to be achieved. Now it is essential to structure this research project by introducing and describing the theory which supports the problem under study.

To start with, this chapter provides a conceptualization of differentiated instruction along with a discussion of some of the studies that have been conducted locally and internationally in order to validate the selection of this approach. Then, tiered activities and their foremost elements are explored as the pedagogical intervention of this project. Finally, the concept of reading comprehension is discussed and related to the identification of main ideas construct.

Nowadays, classrooms are becoming more diverse due to the variety of learning profiles. Learners are seen as individuals able to learn at different paces, with different learning styles and motivated by distinctive reasons. The heterogeneity of learners should no longer be ignored; educators should now consider many aspects such as learning styles, readiness and interests (Tomlinson, Callahan, & Brighton,, 1997).

As stated by Tomlinson (1999), "In differentiated classrooms, teachers provide specific ways for each individual to learn as deeply as possible and as quickly as possible, without assuming one student's road map for learning is identical to anyone else's" (p. 3). In other words, educators are required to identify students' learning preferences in order to respond to their needs. In fact, this research study was proposed taking into consideration this learner diversity and the necessity to support all students.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

In essence, this research study looked for alternatives to approach these various spectrums of learning environments and in doing so, a particular theoretical approach shed some light on this differentiation present in the classrooms. This philosophy is known as "differentiated instruction", one of the main constructs of this research study.

Differentiated Instruction

The area of differentiated instruction has been approached by many authors. One of the most recognized authority in this field is Carol Ann Tomlinson. According to this author (2001), differentiated instruction is "a teaching theory based on the premise that instructional approaches should vary and be adapted in relation to individual and diverse students in classrooms" (p. 24). This corroborates how instruction should change bearing in mind the learners' conditions and needs. Educators are not expected to design a different lesson or activity for each student but to adapt the materials and the content to meet all learners' requirements.

It is pertinent to mention that before this model gained ground in educational field, some previous theories took into consideration differences in the learning process. According to Drapeau (2004) "four major approaches had a profound influence on teaching and learning in recent years, and their ideas have inspired a variety of methods for differentiation: Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Learning, brain research, learning styles and multiple intelligences" (p. 46). Such theories showed evidence of how learners appear to approach learning processes differently.

One the most relevant foundations of differentiation was "Multiple intelligences", as a theory that supports the existence of nine highly diverse ways to learn (Drapeau, 2004). In fact, "it was in this realm that Tomlinson utilized multiple intelligences theory as the basis for advocating increased differentiation in curricular activities" (Bender, 2008, p. 9). This clearly

shows how this teaching philosophy is based on the premise that learners learn differently and require distinctive strategies to learn.

Another foundation of differentiation is given by learning styles research. Researchers on learning styles have investigated the relationship between personality, intelligence, and aptitude, and have found that there is no one "best". In fact, "It is apparent that an awareness of different learning styles is a significant tool to understand differences and assist with student development" (Strong, Silver, & Perini, 2001, p. 58). Learning styles have provided insights about the ways in which learners prefer to learn. Actually, they are indicators of how students process information and perceive the world. In this sense, learning styles validate the purpose of differentiated instruction making tangible current student diversity.

The previous theoretical foundations provided the leading expert in this field, Carol Ann Tomlinson, with a rationale to come up with the differentiation philosophy that in her own terms "is not just an instructional strategy, nor is it a recipe for teaching, rather it is an innovative way of thinking about teaching and learning" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 20). Similarly, Gregory and Chapman (2007) define differentiation as a "philosophy that enables educators to plan strategically in order to reach the needs of the diverse learners in classrooms today to achieve targeted standards" (p. 2).

In other words, differentiation allows educators to acknowledge learners' profile and plan based on authentic needs bearing in mind the content, the process and the product as part of a differentiated classroom. When learner´s necessities are taken into account, teachers benefit from it on the one hand by accomplishing the expected goals and on the other hand by providing learners with tools to find out their own learning styles.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

When differentiated instruction is implemented, the classroom turns into a place where differentiation can be experienced from three perspectives: the content, the process and the product. The content refers to what the teachers want the students to learn. The description of the activities designed to achieve the expected outcomes as well as their adaptation is the process. The product is the interpretation made by students where they depict what they have learned (Tomlinson, 1999).

Similarly, Heacox (2002) describes differentiation as a way to respond to students' requirements taking into consideration what they already know and what they should learn. Moreover, this philosophy accounts for the best ways of learning and allows learners to show their understanding, which in turn enhances their abilities and interests.

Another conceptualization is provided by O'Meara (2010): "Differentiation is not a singular, linear process, it is a flow chart with critical junctures and decisions and a process used in both planning and teaching" (p. 15). As soon as educators get involved with this differentiation practice, they will be cognizant of a process which encompasses changes, adaptation, choices and assessment.

Assessment plays a relevant role in this ever-changing process by providing educators with data about learner´s process in order to make decisions based on readiness, interests and learning profile. Additionally, it allows students to demonstrate what they have learned. At this point, it is important to mention that "assessment always has more to do with helping students grow that with cataloging their mistakes" (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 11).

As differentiated instruction supports the student diversity in the classrooms, it is imperative to acknowledge that learners vary in three important ways: readiness, interests and learning profiles. Readiness implies what the learners understand and are able to do regarding a

particular topic. In Tomlinson's words "the current knowledge, understanding, and skill level a student has related to a particular sequence of learning" (p. 3). Interest deals with the curiosity or passion for a particular topic. Educators should look for the ways to link learners´ preferences with the content to be taught in order catch the students' attention and motivate them towards the learning of new topics. According to Tomlinson (1999), "learning prolife has to do with how we learn. It may be shaped by intelligence, preferences, gender, culture, or learning style" (p. 11). The identification of these learning tendencies help students learn as they prefer to do so.

Previous Studies on Differentiated Instruction and Reading

Having explained the core construct that underlies this research project, it is pertinent to point out some previous studies regarding reading and differentiated instruction as a support for this research project. In 2003, a research study titled "Increasing Reading Achievement of Primary and Middle School Students through Differentiated instruction" by Baumgartner, Lipowski, and Rush (2003), was conducted with the purpose of improving reading achievement of primary and middle school students in Northern Illinois. The need analysis was carried out through a Nonsense Word test, a reading strategy checklist, and a student survey. The data revealed that students had difficulties with phonemic aspects and comprehension skills. Additionally, students evidenced problems when choosing books to read and they were not interested in reading.

By means of differentiated instruction strategies such as flexible grouping, student choice on a variety of tasks, increased self-selected reading time, and access to a variety of reading materials, the participants demonstrated improvement and motivation towards reading. According to the researchers, students worked as part of many different groups depending on the task and/or content. Sometimes students were placed in groups based on readiness, other times they were

placed based on interest and/or learning profile. This strategy allowed students to work with a wide variety of peers and kept them from being labeled as struggling learners. Moreover, there was an increase in the mastery of phonemic and decoding skills as participants had the opportunity to select different reading material and read at their own pace. Finally, students' attitudes towards reading changed along with their perception of their reading skills as a result of the self-selected reading time and variety of material available to read. The findings of this research led the authors to conclude that the needs of individual students must not be overlooked and varying strategies of instruction must be considered when nurturing reading skills.

Another study concerning differentiated instruction by Flaherty and Hackler (2010) addressed the low intrinsic motivational behaviors in fourth and sixth graders in a small Midwestern community. The data instruments which documented this issue were classroom observation checklists, parent surveys and student self-reported surveys.

In order to overcome the above-mentioned situation, differentiated instruction and cooperative learning approaches were implemented in the targeted classrooms. After the intervention, the data analysis revealed enhancement in homework completion, participation and independent work. This improvement was the result of differentiating instruction using project-based learning. This differentiated strategy allowed students to reflect upon their own ideas and opinions, exercise voice and choice, and make decisions that affected project outcomes and the learning process in general. The authors of this study asserted that students generally worked in small, cooperative groups in the project-based learning model. They found sources, conducted research, and each of them held responsible for learning and the completion of tasks. As conclusion, the researcher recommended the application of differentiated instruction strategies in the classroom to help students take greater responsibility for their own learning and foster

motivation. Likewise, he suggested the administration of an inventory or diagnostic test before implementing differentiated strategies in order to increase the likelihood of great student engagement and motivation during instruction.

Finally, in 2001 a study entitled "Reading strategies training for young learners" by Olmos and Cruz (2001) was conducted at Universidad Distrital in Bogota (Colombia). This action research project had as target population fifteen students from the San Viator School. The phenomenon under study was the imbalance found in the reading class. Whilst some students struggled with reading comprehension skills, others seemed to succeed and reach the expected outcomes. This concern led the researcher to look for strategies to overcome this situation helping all students reach the standards and move forward in their learning process. As such, the main objective was to implement metacognitive strategies to help all participants succeed in reading comprehension. The instruments to gather data were observation, informal interviews, think-alouds and questionnaires. By means of metacognitive strategies such as monitoring and setting a purpose for reading, the students found new ways to approach reading and improve their performance. From the emerging findings, the researcher concluded that educators are called upon to restructure their professional practices in order to meet students' needs. Additionally, metacognitive strategies proved to be an effective way to help learners enhance their reading skills.

The aforementioned studies shed some light on this research project providing theoretical support and validating differentiated instruction as a worthy approach to be implemented. Essentially, they have provided useful insights on the reasons underlying the use of differentiated products as a technique to boost reading comprehension. The first study reveals how differentiated instruction strategies favor learners' reading skills. Additionally, attitudinal

changes can be generated when learners are aware of their preferred ways to approach the learning.

The second research study evidenced how differentiated instruction provides not only strategies to meet learners' academic needs but also ways to strengthen learners' independent work and motivation. When learners feel some degree of control over their learning process, they notice that their success is a direct result of the amount of effort they have put forth what may raise their autonomy and motivation.

The local study makes evident the constant need of modifying instruction in order to reach all learners. As reported by the author, not all individuals learn at the same pace and motivated by the same reasons. However, it is the teacher's job to look for the best instructional strategies to address not only the average students but also the high and lower achievers.

Even though the findings of these research studies may give account of differentiated strategies as a facilitative technique to enhance comprehension and maybe learning of new skills, there is still a remaining concern regarding the exploration and analysis of the impact and effects that a particular strategy such as "tiered products" may have on the reading comprehension process of L2 students. Since most of the studies on differentiated instruction were mostly about reading skills in general, it is necessary to widen the spectrum of research to analyze whether tiered products as a differentiated strategy may facilitate the process of identifying main ideas of narrative texts and their impact in the way participants develop their reading skills and, therefore, their reading comprehension.

On the other hand, research on differentiated instruction in EFL contexts is almost inexistent in Colombia, therefore, it would be profitable to conduct studies like this one to further

knowledge on differentiated instruction for all who are interested to put the effort forth to best suit the needs of all students and to help them succeed to their highest potential.

Tiered Activities

As differentiated instruction allows for current learner diversity, this research study advocated for its use and implementation to vary the instructional strategies and activities aiming at all these different intelligences and learning styles. As pointed out by Tomlinson (2003), "there are strategies that guide the teacher in looking at students in small groups or individually rather than only as a whole class" (p. 16). These differentiated strategies generate different learning options or paths to learning so that students may feel free to perform at their level. Such strategies include learning stations, learning centers, agendas, learning contracts, portfolios and tiered activities.

- Learning stations: Using stations involves setting up different spots in the classroom where students work on various tasks simultaneously. These stations invite flexible grouping because not all students need to go to all stations all the time (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 62).

- Learning centers: They are classroom areas that contain a collection of activities or materials designed to teach, reinforce, or extend a particular skill or concept (Kaplan, Kaplan, Madsen & Gould, 1980 as cited in Tomlinson 1999, p. 76).

- Agendas: These are personalized lists of tasks that a student must complete in a specified time, usually two to three weeks. Student agendas throughout a class will have similar and dissimilar elements (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 66).

- Learning contracts: Learning contracts begin with an agreement between the teacher and the student. The teacher specifies the necessary skills expected to be

learned by the student and the required components of the assignment. Learners decide on how to present the task or information to the class. This strategy fosters autonomy as the learner chooses the activities to accomplish the assigned task and works independently (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 87).

- Portfolios: a portfolio is a collection of student's works which documents the learning process and individual growth. In Tomlinson´s view (1999) portfolios are "motivating because of the heavy emphasis in student choice. They also provide an ongoing channel of assessment, which helps teachers see students as individuals" (p. 93).

- Tiered activities: According to Pierce and Adams (2004), a tiered lesson is "a differentiation strategy that addresses a particular standard, key concept, and generalization, but allows several pathways for students to arrive at an understanding…" (p. 60) (See appendix B as sample of a tiered lesson). Therefore, the implementation of this strategy may allow teachers meet students' individual needs and foster motivation reading comprehension as well. As some advanced students go beyond the expected outcomes, they need something challenging to strengthen their skills. Simultaneously, those struggling learners need support and activities to overcome difficulties.

Similarly, educators may employ tiered activities to focus on a particular skill but at different levels of complexity, abstractness and open-endedness (Tomlinson, 1999). Based on the premise that each individual learns at a different pace, using varied learning styles and strategies, tiered lessons can be a way to ensure that all students are learning regardless their abilities. For instance, in a reading lesson, all students can learn about a topic by applying leveled reading texts

that fit their distinctive abilities. Consequently, a class can aim at the same goal, but following different paths (Conklin, 2009).

In order to design a tiered lesson, Heacox and Warmeli (2009) suggest three main steps. First, it is important to diagnose the needs of the students by using methods as observation and reflection. Second, an activity or project is designed as a way to respond to the students' necessities. Finally, particular learners need to be matched to the corresponding learning experience.

The design of these tiered activities is not an easy job, but it is a way to involve all students in the learning process acknowledging their diversity. Nowadays, educators should accommodate their instructional approaches to students´ learning profiles, preferences and manners to perceive and understand the world.

Keeping in mind the strategies for differentiation in the classroom mentioned above, this research study favored the use of tiered activities (by product) as a way to explore students' reading comprehension process, meeting the needs of struggling learners and extending the thinking or skills of high achievers during the reading instruction. Subsequently, the use of tiered products as a way to allow learners to demonstrate their understanding or mastery of a particular skill according to their learning styles or interests may benefit their reading comprehension process.

Tiered Products

As this research study attempted to explore students' reading comprehension skills, specifically the identification of main ideas through the implementation of tiered products, it was essential to define these products as the ways in which learners demonstrate what they have come to know or do as a result of a period of study (Tomlinson, 2001). In order to implement and

include the differentiating component of the products, some elements need to be considered according to Pierce and Adams (2004).

First of all, a unit of study must be identified in order to set what the learners must know, understand or be able to do. Secondly, different formats or options should be provided in regard to students´ interests, preferences and learning styles. Finally, deciding on scaffolding is vital as to promote success when designing the products. These aspects of tiered products shed some light on this research study regarding the pedagogical intervention and the tentative steps to follow when planning the didactic units or lessons for the implementation.

Previous Studies on the Implementation of Differentiated Strategies

Having considered the above differentiated strategies, it is worth mentioning previous studies that support such strategies.

To start with, Good (2006) conducted a research study in a public school in Oregon. The purpose was to find out the most effective differentiated strategies for elementary schools, particularly in primary grades. The data collection instruments were semi-structured interviews, learning logs and video recordings. Before the implementation of differentiated instruction in two primary grades, young children were administered an interest inventory to find out their preferences and dislikes. Likewise, they had the chance to work with different groups, and different materials. The findings revealed that in order to accommodate differences regarding readiness, learning profile and interests, flexible grouping and tiered assignments are strategies that provide outstanding ways of reaching students.

On the whole, the results of this study showed that differentiated instruction is an excellent way to ensure that all children are learning according to their knowledge and skill

levels. Besides, the creation of a differentiated classroom is a complex process that should be best undertaken with the support of parents, colleagues, and administrators.

On the other hand, the author recommends teachers working with differentiation to network with colleagues in order to update materials and strategies simplifying the extensive preparation that is necessary for high-quality teaching.

Another study by Koeze, (2007) analyzed the impact of differentiated strategies on student academic performance. In this research, the participants were teachers from fourth and fifth grades in a rural school in Michigan. The aim of the research was to determine if teachers using differentiated instructional strategies were producing higher achievement results with their students than teachers not using differentiation strategies. At the end of the investigation, the findings suggested that differentiated strategies of choice and interest play a vital role in achievement and student satisfaction in learning.

The studies cited above confirm the use of differentiated strategies as an effective and interesting way to meet students' needs and contribute to the educational field. Actually, educators as facilitators and designers of materials for lessons may benefit and enrich their teaching practice through differentiation. When implementing differentiated instructional strategies, teachers and learners gain. It is not a matter of helping just learners but also to enhance the teaching process.

As this study planned to implement differentiated strategies as the pedagogical intervention, the research studies previously stated gave some ideas on how to use differentiation in the classroom to have a positive effect on learners´ achievement. Additionally, these investigations validated the implementation of differentiated instructional strategies as a tool to involve every single student in the learning process.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Now, it is time to talk about reading comprehension and identification of main ideas as the skill to explore and describe throughout this research study.

Reading Comprehension

According to Rasinski, Brassell, and Yoop (2008), "Reading is the creation of meaning from the printed page. Although it may involve the sounding out of words, accessing the meaning of words, reading the text with appropriate fluency, and providing expression, these are all sideshows to the main event- making meaning" (p. 15). Nowadays, reading is not only done through printed material but also through digital formats. Consequently, teachers need to understand how children learn to read, how to teach to read and how to help kids with reading difficulties.

In practice, reading as a process implies a set of cognitive, affective and social responses. When children read, they must be able to understand symbols, follow sequences, make connections and put everything together to make sense of the text. According to Roe and Smith (2009), reading comprises aspects such as vision, perception, sequence, interests of the reader and comprehension.

To start with, vision refers to ability to focus the eyes on the reading text and be able to move them across the page. Children, who are not able to do so, may reread or skip lines, both of which may hinder the comprehension process. Perception involves the interpretation of impressions that reach the brain. For instance, when a person is reading, the brain receives the visual impressions and recognizes the meaning of the images, words or phrases.

Regarding the sequence of reading, readers must be able to follow the order in which the reading material is organized. Sometimes, this can be a challenge for learners who have not been exposed to different reading materials. In fact, children should be instructed on how to approach

varied reading resources to enrich their reading comprehension process. The affective aspect of reading relies on interests and attitudes. These elements influence how hard the learners will work at the reading task. It is essential to provide attractive and engaging reading materials that appeal to students and motivate them to read.

Finally, one of the hardest parts of reading is the comprehension process. Comprehension can be understood as "the process of making meaning from text. The goal, therefore, is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences" (Wolley, 2011, p. 15).When reading, most of the time learners attempt to grasp each word separately and the challenge emerges when they want to link the words to create meaning.

Frequently, children focus on the unknown words and they struggle to find out the meaning without a grasp of what the whole sentence is about. This phenomenon reflects the need to look for strategies to overcome the situation. Hence, it is vital to know what the comprehension process embraces. Reading comprehension is an act influenced by three elements the reader, the text and the activity (Walpole & Mackenna, 2007, p. 7).

Likewise, Snow (2002) claims that in considering reading comprehension two words come to light: extracting and constructing, and of course the three elements mentioned above. The reader, a person who incorporates a set of capacities, knowledge and experiences to the reading, the text, any printed or electronic source and the activity, as the processes and consequences related to the act of reading.

This view of reading comprehension fits very well into the differentiated instruction approach since it explains comprehension as a process and not as an isolated aspect of the reading skill. In addition, it entails the activities in which learners engage in when reading. Such activities

can be linked somehow with the differentiated strategies mentioned before. Educators need to have a great understanding of their learners' weaknesses and strengths to provide not only the appropriate instruction but also the best strategies to meet their needs.

Having explained the construct of reading comprehension, it is time to focus on the specific reading comprehension skill: "identification of main ideas".

Identification of main ideas

Getting the main ideas from a text is not an easy job for young and older learners (William, 1988 as cited in O'connor & Vadasy, 2011, p.199). Actually, identifying main ideas is a relevant goal in reading at elementary schools. Therefore, it is important to help learners overcome this difficulty and improve their reading process.

In accordance with O'connor and Vadasy (2011), "a main idea tells what the whole story is about" (p. 202). Additionally, it is pertinent to consider that according to the text, the main idea can have a different focus. For instance, the main idea for a narrative next is not the same as for an expository text. While in narrative texts, the reader has to distinguish the theme of the story from the events and the sequence, in expository texts the reader needs to make a generalization or thesis based on relevant ideas regarding a topic (William, 2004 as cited in O'connor & Vadasy, 2011).

Keeping in the same line, Zwiers (2010) asserts that "teachers need to train students' brains to sculpt main ideas" (p.73). He proposes a formula to help learners identify main ideas. This formula is a visual way to show how readers think when they generate main points from a text. First of all, a formulation of the topic must be done, and then the reader needs to look for the most relevant information mentioned about it and finally, the reader must understand the purpose of the author with such reading text.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

For the purpose of this study, the identification of main ideas focused on narrative texts (fiction- nonfiction stories) taking into account the proficiency level of the participants, the results of the preliminary data analysis and the English subject syllabus of the school "Colegio Bilingue Buckingham".

Overall, this chapter introduced the definitions, and existing theories and research studies to articulate and support this research project. It also presented and described the theory which explains why the research problem under study exists.

Chapter 3

Research Design

This chapter provides a specification of the research paradigm, approach and advantages of the selected methodology. In addition to this, it presents an explanation of the general and specific objectives, a detailed description of the participants and the setting including vision, mission, materials curriculum and foundations for the English language program. It also incorporates an explanation of the researcher´s role, the chosen data instruments and the procedures to collect data. Finally, it gives account of the ethical considerations that were taken into account and the validity and triangulation processes.

Research Paradigm and Approach

This study followed the principles of qualitative action research. As Burns (1999) points out "the aim of qualitative approaches is to offer descriptions, interpretations and clarifications of naturalistic social contexts" (p. 22). In addition to this, qualitative research seeks to understand a given research problem from the perspectives of the local population it involves. It is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, behaviors and opinions in particular contexts (Mack & McQueen, 2005). In fact, this research study intended to explore the participants' reading comprehension process in terms of the identification of main ideas through the implementation of tiered activities in a bilingual school and to describe or interpret the emerging patterns, behaviors or categories that may arise.

Additionally, as an action research study, this project was conducted in the immediate researcher's context or educational setting where the practitioner took active part in the research process (Willey, 2010).

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

As stated by Tomal (2010), "action research is suitable for educators as a practical process because it does not require statistical analysis" (p. 11). Therefore, the outcomes of this type of study are regarded as a process concerned with the improvement in the research context and not as a product for testing or confirming a hypothesis.

The aforementioned advantage of the action research approach suited this project since the main objective was to describe and document the possible effects of tiered instruction on the participants' identification of main ideas when reading. As a consequence, the data collected were detailed and descriptive so as to give account of the research question, leaving aside measurable quantities.

Other advantages that validated the use of action research in this project were the systematic data collection and the focus on change (Burns, 1999). On the one hand, this study followed a step-by-step procedure where the data were systematically observed, organized and categorized. On the other hand, this research project intended to have an impact on the setting where it was conducted. This effect could be in terms of educators' methodologies to teach and in learners' reading comprehension process.

Finally, Craig (2009) adds that action research does not start just from an initial question but the process begins with the problem identification, which leads to research questions (p. 11). This benefit of action research provided the researcher with the opportunity to pose a research question and objectives to direct the study and find a solution for the problem under study. Actually, action research places its emphasis on the solution of a problem in a local setting. It is a systematic method of solving a problem making practices better (Burns, 1999).

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Setting

This study was carried out at "Colegio Bilingue Buckingham" located in northwest Bogota in Suba. Since its foundation, this school has been coeducational, bilingual, and established in calendar B, for students of Pre-School, Primary and High School.

The school´s philosophy has as a main purpose to provide students with a nurturing environment where they reinforce their self-esteem, and dare to be authentic and to do their best projecting themselves with enthusiasm and dynamism to the social environment.

In addition to this, the PEI (Proyecto Educativo Institucional) of the institution is based on the methodology "Teaching for understanding" which leads children to the development of competences according to their skills. Besides, multiple intelligences are considered as a meaningful way to strengthen abilities directly related to the students' interests and expectations.

Mission. As mission, this school seeks to provide an education characterized by Warmth, Quality, Excellence, Innovation and Transcendence, teaching in life and for life. It also emphasizes a global vision with social responsibility and academic excellence where knowledge is the result of the exploration, research and practical work of students, achieving and demonstrating quality in all their actions. (Manual de Convivencia Intitucional, 2002, p.16).

Curriculum. Along with the teaching for understanding methodology, the school follows the IBO principles as a certificated institution in Diploma and Middle Years Program. Consequently, the curriculum model is based on inquiry-based learning which serves to foster differentiation in the classrooms by means of transdiciplinary units, knowledge and skills derived from six subject areas: language, mathematics, arts, science, physical education and social studies. This differentiation element is included in order to reflect individual levels and skills in the tasks carried out in the lessons.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

As a result, differentiated instruction is regarded as an essential element within the school curriculum and the purpose of this project gained validity within this educational setting by incorporating the specific concerns of the institution.

English language program. English is the primary medium of instruction as most of the subjects are taught in this language. As a result, the syllabus is based on a subject plan which includes the topics, competencies to be developed, materials and the connections with the units of inquiry stated by the IBO and the subject areas.

Moreover, as a way to certify the learners' language proficiency based on international standards, the students are expected to take and pass successfully the Cambridge Exams KET, PET, FCE, among others through the British Council Organization.

Participants

The participants of this study were six girls and eleven boys, aged between 9-10 years. Their proficiency level is described as [1]A2 according to the Common European Framework. These third graders can understand and follow instructions in the lessons and express themselves using a good range of vocabulary above the expected level. Their weaknesses include the grammatical sentence construction and the identification of main ideas for reading comprehension.

These learners are very competitive and active. They respond well to praise and are highly motivated by grades. The way input is presented affects notably their interest and motivation towards the topics.

---

[1] The CEFR describes foreign language proficiency at six levels: A1 and A2, B1 and B2, C1 and C2. A2 is known as Elementary ('Waystage'").

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

They lose the focus and become distracted easily. Therefore, they need constant review of the rules and procedures of the classroom. Likewise, they require variety of activities reinforcing the focus of the lesson.

These students are experiencing a process of language development that is not linear, but evolutionary. They are building grammar concepts and [2]L1 transfer is sometimes present. They are also developing higher order thinking skills such as comparing and analyzing information through the use of graphic organizers and problem –based learning.

It is worth mentioning that these participants were selected by using convenience sampling. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison, (2007), in convenience sampling "researchers simply choose the sample from those to whom they have easy access" (p.114). In this case, the researcher only had access to this group of participants as a self-contained teacher.

In this research setting, the self-contained teachers are those who teach all the subject areas to a particular group of students and have no opportunity for a change in groups. As stated by Suter (2011), "action research centers on a practical problem within a personal but applied setting (classroom) and often includes the researcher's captive group of students" (p. 242).

Researcher's Role

The researcher' role during this study was that of a participant- observer. The participant observation allowed the researcher to adopt different levels of involvement in the research study (Burns, 1999). In fact, as an observer, the role of the researcher was to keep a record of the participants' performances, behaviors or perceptions regarding the implementation of tiered

---

[2] **L1:** this term refers to the language a person learns from birth. The mother tongue or first language.

products in the identification of main ideas as objectively as possible using the data collection instruments.

As a participant, the researcher interacted with the participants to make sense of the tiered instruction and stories to read. In Burns' words, "the researcher becomes a member of the context and participates in its culture and activities" (p. 82).

Finally, the researcher as an implementer undertook any changes during the research process and analyzed, reflected and made decisions upon the pedagogical intervention and gathered data. As the role of researcher implied to be the instrument of both data collection and data interpretation, the investigator attempted to ensure minimum bias by adopting well-established research methods (grounded approach), triangulating the data to check and establish validity in the study and presenting the research project in symposiums to receive feedback from peers, professors and project director in order to challenge assumptions made along the research process.

Instruments and Procedures for Data Collection

The sources of data for this action research project were semi-structured interviews, learning logs and artifacts. These instruments enabled the researcher to answer the stated question and keep the integrity of the study.

Semi-structured interviews. According to Cousin (2009), semi- structured interviews allowed researchers to develop in-depth accounts of experiences and perceptions with individuals (p.71). In other words, this instrument (See Appendix C) served as a source of empirical and rich data regarding developmental aspects of the reading process, specifically (identification of main ideas), and as a detection of participants' perceptions towards the implementation of tiered instruction.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

In addition, using a free-flowing conversation with children and recording the chats allowed the researcher to keep track of learners' expectations and perspectives when reading the fiction stories used in the implementation and finding the main ideas. As stated by Burns (1999), this type of interviews provides flexibility and allows the emergence of themes and topics that may not be anticipated at the beginning of the research.

These semi-structured interviews were carried out in the middle and at the end of the semester in order to keep a record of participants' perceptions and the development of the identification of main ideas when reading. As the interviews were recorded, the data were taken from the corresponding transcriptions.

Artifacts. Another instrument to collect data in this investigation was the students' artifacts. It means the tiered products (graphic organizers, dioramas, videos, posters, etc.) made by the participants as a result of the pedagogical intervention. These artifacts were analyzed by the researcher as the evidence of the identification of main ideas process carried out in each cycle. This served to see the impact of the intervention and analyzed the identification of main idea process beyond the classroom observation.

Willis (2008) asserts that artifacts can be regarded as products of an activity or process. In this case, these products were the materialization of the participants´ reading comprehension process when finding the main idea in a fictional text.

In order to analyze these tiered products, a rubric (See Appendix D) was used to provide evidence of the students' application or understanding of reading skills, specifically the identification of main idea during the implementation stage.

Learning logs. Apart from interviews and artifacts, this study employed learning logs (See Appendix E) as a mechanism for recording ideas and thoughts while learning (Buehl, 2009). This instrument revealed students´ perceptions towards the implementation of tiered products and provided insights into what they understood by identification of main ideas in a fiction story. In practice, students were asked to answer some questions in their learning logs after they had read and made their tiered products.

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations that were contemplated in this study are the ones suggested by Burns (1999) and linked to the following aspects: responsibility, confidentiality and negotiation.

First of all, the researcher had the responsibility to protect the participants in this investigation. It was essential to respect the rights, privacy and dignity of the participants and the integrity of the setting where this research was conducted. Therefore, as the research population was children, their parents were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study before its implementation.

In addition to this, a consent form (See Appendix F) was sent to parents in order to get their permission as the participants were under the age of 18 and they were unable to make this type of decision. The researcher also clarified the right to participate or withdraw at any time and the null effect of this study on the participants' grades.

With regards to confidentiality, the personal information of the participants was confidential and anonymous to protect their identity. Moreover, the only person who had access to the data collected was the researcher.

Lastly, the researcher negotiated the time for the implementation and presented a consent form (See Appendix G) to get permission from the school's principal in order to conduct the research study.

Validation Process

In order to give validity to this study, aforementioned instruments were chosen and designed based on the research question and objectives. As Sagor (2011) points out "validity refers to whether the data actually reflect the phenomena they claim" (p.109). In effect, these data collection instruments were piloted with a similar population to ensure validity and warn about the inappropriateness or drawbacks that may emerge during the administration of the real research.

Another way to check for validity in this study was through the use of triangulation to include different perspectives on the situation being addressed (Burns, 1999). As a result, the learning logs, students' artifacts and semi-structured interviews were contrasted and compared to corroborate the findings and enhance validity.

Finally, the researcher requested the revision of the instruments by experts- in this case the thesis director, professors and colleagues using reflective techniques to analyze their pertinence and whether they allowed the researcher to collect sensible data that assisted her in drawing conclusions and obtaining relevant outcomes

Procedures for Data Analysis

Finally, data was analyzed by using a grounded approach. As claimed by Burns (1999): "grounded research enables the researcher to adopt interpretations that are motivated by data derived from the actual social situation, in this case teachers' own classrooms, rather than by theoretical constructs alone" (1999, p. 25). Therefore, the researcher in this case, did not begin

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

the process of research with a predetermined theory in mind. On the contrary, this formulation of theories emerged from the data analysis.

In practice, the data derived from this study followed the process proposed by Freeman: naming, grouping, finding relationships, and displaying. Thus, the researcher compared and coded the data. Then, detailed categories emerged and relationships or patterns were identified. Lastly, an interpretative stage was carried out to make sense of the analyzed data in terms of implications and connections with the research question (Freeman, 1998).

On the whole, this chapter presented the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data. In other words, it included the structure, context, strategy and action plan (See appendix H) of the investigation so as to obtain answers to the stated research question.

Chapter 4

Instructional Design

This chapter is devoted to explaining the pedagogical intervention, the teaching approach behind it and the instructional steps followed in order to solve the problematic situation addressed in this research project. As McArdle (1991) points out, an "instructional design simply defined means using a systematic process to understand human performance problem, figuring out what to do about it and then doing something about it"(p. 3) .

Additionally, this chapter presents a description of the resources that were used, a timeline (See Appendix I) to give an approximation of the implementation- data collection stages and a sample of a lesson plan (See Appendix J) for the pedagogical instruction.

Tiered Activities

Tiering can be based on challenge level, complexity, resources, process or product (Heacox, 2002, p.19). The selection of any of the aforementioned aspects varies according to the context, learners' situation and needs. In this case, this research project advocated for the use of tiered products as the pedagogical intervention and the means to explore participants' reading comprehension process in terms of identification of main ideas in fictional stories, meeting the needs of struggling learners and extending the thinking or skills of high achievers during the reading instruction. Therefore, this strategy was selected since it allowed learners to demonstrate their understanding or mastery of a particular skill according to their learning styles or interests, benefiting their reading comprehension process.

This intervention was based on the principles of differentiated instruction as the teaching approach that supports tiered activities. As the seminal author Tomlinson asserts, "differentiated instruction is an approach to teaching in which teachers proactively modify teaching methods,

resources, learning activities, and students products to maximize the learning opportunity for each student in the classroom" (2001. p. 20). For the purpose of this project, the differentiation of the students' products provided evidence of their reading comprehension process and depicted perceptions or insights regarding the tiered products development.

In practice, this pedagogical intervention was developed taking into consideration the following cycle (figure 1) that involved a skill exploration stage, pre-reading, while- reading and post-reading phases, a tiered product development step and an assessment moment.

Figure 1
Pedagogical Intervention Sample
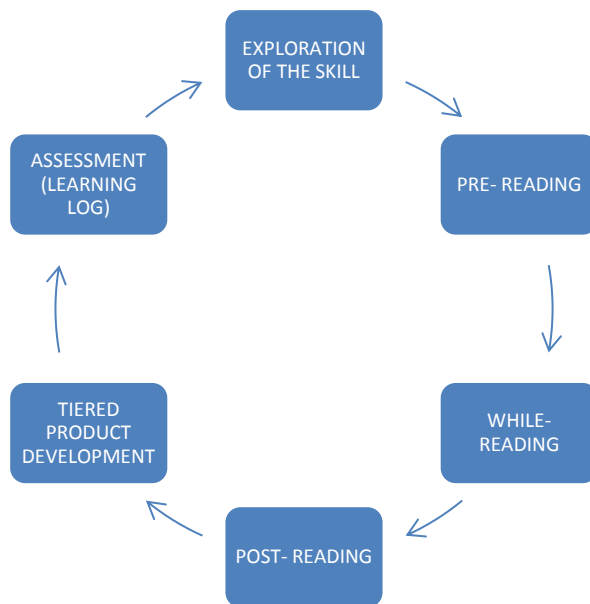
In the skill exploration stage, the lessons were oriented towards the study of the identification of main ideas as part of the reading comprehension process. The students were instructed on what a main idea entails and the elements they would need to take into consideration when grasping the main idea of a fiction text.

After studying the concept of main idea, a pre- reading stage followed in order to acknowledge the different students' experiences and background knowledge influencing how

they would read and learn from the fiction stories. Additionally, in this stage students had the opportunity to explore connections, specific vocabulary and speculate on possibilities regarding the topic or issue of the reading text.

The while- reading stage was the phase where students could confirm predictions, gather and organize information, make generalizations about new understandings gained from the text and identify the main idea. As Wallace (1992) states "the aim of while- reading activities is to encourage learners to be flexible, active and reflective readers" (p. 93). Therefore, this stage provided activities such as rearranging paragraphs, interpretation of characters or setting and KWL (what I Know/what I Want to know/what I have Learned) charts, among others, which gave foundation to learners in order to find the main idea of the text.

In the post- reading stage, the learners articulated and processed their understanding of what they have read through tasks such as paired reviews, summarizing, gap filling exercises, flow charts, etc. Consequently, this stage worked as the consolidation of the identification of the main idea.

In the tiered product development stage (figure 2), students chose, created and presented a product that could demonstrate their understanding of the main idea and the steps they followed to arrive at that learning result (Glass, 2009). These products were differentiated according to the learners' profile in terms of learning styles (auditory, visual, tactile- kinesthetic). Therefore, an inventory test (See appendix K) was administered at the beginning of the intervention to get an overview of the participants' learning styles. The results of this test served as basis for the list of products that were offered to students.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Figure 2
Tiered Product Development
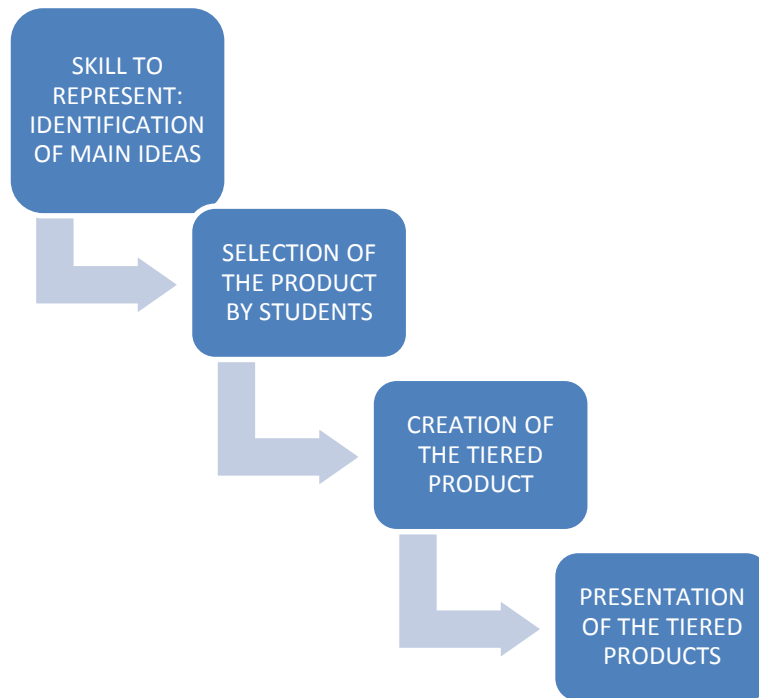
Finally, in the assessment stage students were assessed in two different ways. First of all, a rubric (See appendix D) was designed to give account of the students' performance when representing the main ideas of a text. Secondly, students filled in a learning log by answering some questions in relation to their own learning experience and their perceptions toward the tiered product development.

In accordance with what has been mentioned so far, the objectives for this pedagogical intervention were:

- To increase students' vocabulary through the reading of fiction stories in the foreign language.

- To develop diverse reading activities that could help students in their foreign language learning process.

- To enhance the students' reading comprehension process through the implementation of tiered products.

Instructional Materials

The materials for this pedagogical intervention were provided by the school where the research project was conducted. Some fiction texts (See Appendix L) were taken from the Harcourt Collections Book as a requirement for the reading lessons at this institution. On the other hand, the school has a virtual reading resource center called "Reading A-Z" that allows teachers to explore and choose the most appropriate texts for students according to their ages. This reading center pays close attention to research findings when developing reading resources, thus its reading texts are reliable and supported by current investigations. This was the second source of materials for the pedagogical intervention of this research project.

The classes were developed taking into account a timeline (See Appendix I) considered by McCarthy in Reid (1995) as "significant ideas that relate to other significant ideas in a way that can be connected to the main body of the content and can create meaning for students" (p. 60). This timeline allowed the researcher to smoothly follow a sequential group of activities and implement the readings material.

The lesson planning for this pedagogical intervention was divided into three stages, namely, the pre-reading stage, the while-reading stage and the post-reading stage. In each stage a certain amount of activities were applied to engage participants in the reading process. Teaching reading in such a way also provided students with knowledge and tools needed to get to the development of the tiered products.

In a nutshell, differentiated products were taken as the pedagogical intervention of this project in four cycles of four hours in which learners had the opportunity to explore and show what they have learned and done regarding the identification of main idea when it comes to reading fiction stories.

This chapter offered a description of the instructional steps, resources and teaching approach behind the pedagogical intervention in order to solve the problematic situation addressed in this research study.

<div align="center">

Chapter 5

Data Analysis and Findings

</div>

This chapter is devoted to explaining the type of approach to data analysis used in this study along with the data management and analysis procedures followed to validate the research process. In addition, it portrays the categories, interpretation and findings obtained from the data gathered by means of students' artifacts, learning logs and semi-structured interviews.

Data Analysis Approach

For the analysis of the emerging data, this research study advocated for the use of Grounded Theory Approach. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), "a grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents" (p. 23). In other words, the process for building grounded theory in this research involved different phases, in which the researcher decided on a problem, framed it in a research question, collected data, analyzed it and built theory. Thus, this project did not start with a theory to test or prove, but with a research question that arose during the needs analysis and research process.

Moreover, this study followed the requisites of grounded theory as to the study; procedures and flexibility a researcher must be able to reach during the process (Strauss &Corbin, 1990). In fact, not only did the researcher read information about different procedures and previous investigations on reading comprehension and tiered products but she also studied and analyzed different methods and practices to carefully address the phenomenon under study.

Additionally, a certain amount of flexibility was necessary in order to adapt instruments or research situations to the phenomenon. For instance, modifications of interview questions and data collection were made as the research proceeded. Therefore, the research study followed

systematic procedures to find what the implementation of tiered products could reveal about third graders' identification of main ideas.

Moreover, the researcher used the grounded theory approach to analyze the data and inductively generate more abstract concepts. To accomplish this, the researcher used open coding, through which commonalities and concepts were identified, axial coding to create categories and sub-categories, and selective coding to define the central phenomenon and then systematically relate it to the other categories.

In short, the use of grounded theory allowed for the establishing of patterns and concepts across the participants' data to reveal what the implementation of tiered products could say about the participants' reading process in regards to the identification of main ideas when reading fictional texts.

Data Management

Once the process of collecting data was started, different strategies for data management were implemented for the purpose of organization and accessibility of each instrument. To start with, the semi-structured interviews were administered in the middle and at the end of the pedagogical intervention. Thus, right after the administration of this instrument, a digital folder was opened to save all interview files. Likewise, the transcriptions were made and saved in another hidden folder to facilitate access and keep the information confidential. Finally, these files were chronologically organized and numbered according to the number assigned at the beginning of the process as a way to identify the twelve participants of the study.

Pertaining to learning logs, the participants filled out this instrument after each cycle. These physical logs included the date, log number and student number. Then, they were stored

and organized in a binder according to the cycle they belonged to in order to keep track of the data obtained in each phase.

Finally, the students' artifacts were analyzed by means of a digital rubric completed by the teacher- researcher after each tiered product presentation. These rubrics were stored and numbered in a digital folder. As evidence of the tiered products created by the participants, pictures were taken in each cycle. These photographs were also saved in a digital folder and classified according to each cycle.

Data Analysis Procedures

In order to determine the units of analysis and pinpoint the core category and categories that would answer the research question, three coding procedures were implemented. They were open coding, axial coding and selective coding. As pointed out by Strauss and Corbin (1990), "coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways" (p. 57).

To begin with, the researcher started the analysis using **open coding** by analyzing the information students had written in the learning logs, what she had written in the observation section of the rubrics and the transcriptions of the semi- structured interviews. The way of approaching this type of coding was through line by line analysis to have a closer examination of phrases, sentences or even single words (Strauss &Corbin, 1990, p. 72). Through this coding procedure the researcher could identify patterns, similar comments or recurrent incidents. It is worth mentioning that during the analysis of each instrument the research question and objectives posed at the beginning of the study were taken into account.

As a result of this open coding, the researcher created a master list (See Appendix M) to keep track of all commonalities and patterns that appeared during the analysis. This master list

represented a primitive outline or classification system reflecting the recurring regularities or patterns in the study (Merriam, 2009, p. 180). Subsequently, the researcher made a matrix (*See Appendix N*) to reduce data and create code families. In practice, when all the information was analyzed and clustered key codes such as**, creativity, preferences, perceptions, reading performances (understanding main idea, reflecting on the reading theme)** came up as the most recurrent incidents. These codes, when put together, led the researcher to the identification of the unit of analysis: students' voice about the implementation of tiered products and the effects of such products on students' identification of main ideas.

With regard to the former unit of analysis, it represents "the active opportunity for students to express their opinions and make decisions regarding the development of their tiered product" (Rogers, 2005, p. 35). For this study, students' ideas and comments about their preferences and feelings were relevant to identify their perceptions towards the implementation of tiered products. The latter aspect was related to the effects tiered products had on students when they identified main ideas.

In the second part of the analysis, **axial coding** was conducted to make connections between categories and sub- categories where data were put together in new ways (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 97). Once the researcher found commonalities in the data, she reduced the number of family groups and began to group the concepts into categories**.** According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) the process of grouping concepts that seem to pertain to the same phenomena is called categorizing; the name of the categories is usually the one that seems most logically related to the data it represents, and should be graphic enough to remind the research quickly of its referent (Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Based on the interpretation of the findings and the analysis done during open and axial coding, two different categories emerged with their corresponding sub-categories. In making this grouping, the researcher carefully considered the units of analysis: students' voice (perceptions) and effects of tiered products on students' identification of main ideas. In the following chart, the research question and the two categories along with their sub-categories are displayed.

Table 3
Categories and Sub-categories

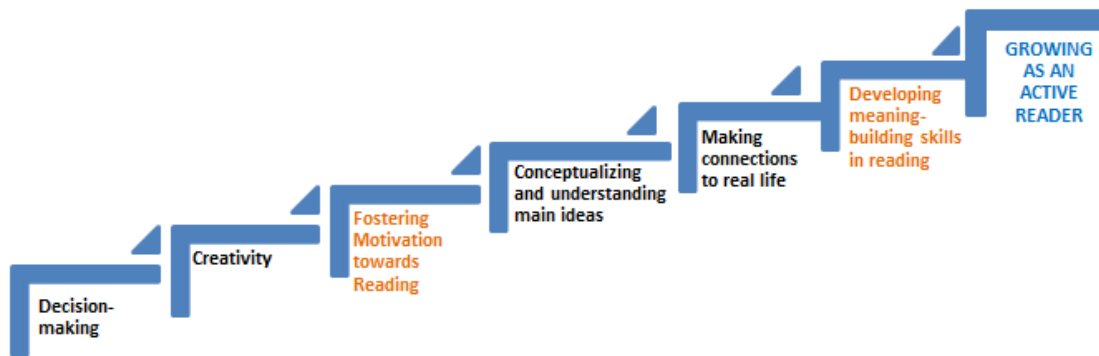|	**Categories**	**Sub- categories**
What may the implementation of tiered products for differentiated instruction reveal about third graders' identification of main ideas when reading fiction stories?	**Fostering Motivation towards Reading**	**Decision-Making**
		Creativity
	Developing Meaning-Building Skills in Reading	**Conceptualizing and Understanding Main Ideas**
		Making Connections to Real Life

Finally, to identify the core category, the researcher developed a process of selective coding to systematically relate categories to other subcategories and validate relationships with the purpose of generating a story line to conceptualize the central phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). After having reduced and analyzed data, the researcher pinpointed as the core category: **Growing as an active reader**. As previously stated in the theoretical framework, reading comprehension does not happen at one point; rather, it is a process of growth that takes place over time. During this time, readers are active in constructing meaning through the processes of interacting with what they read and integrating knowledge with what they already know (Blachowicz & Ogle, 2008). In this case, the implementation of tiered products

allowed participants to undergo a new reading experience making decisions, understanding main ideas, making connections and consequently growing as active readers.

From this core category, the researcher derived two main categories: **"Fostering motivation towards reading"** through decision making and creativity and "**Developing meaning-building skills in reading"** by conceptualizing and understanding main ideas and by making connections to real life, as shown in the following diagram (Figure 4):

Figure 4
Integration of Categories

In determining the core category "Growing as an active reader", the conditional relationships among the categories provided the researcher with the necessary understanding to move to the final interpretation of the theory.

As such, "Growing as an active reader" integrated each of the categories and their properties to build up this process of growth in the participants' reading comprehension by means of the tiered products. Such a process started with the **decision- making** made by the participants when selecting their tiered products to represent the main ideas. Then this possibility of choice led them to be more **creative** in the design and presentation of products. As a result of this, the participants exhibited higher motivation towards reading. As pointed out by Worthy and McKool (1996), "allowing students to make choices about their reading activities increased the likelihood

that they would engage more in reading" (p.26). Consequently, such engagement was translated into *motivation* that enabled them to perform better when conceptualizing and understanding main ideas and making connections to their real lives recognizing reading themes and *constructing meaning*.

Certainly, the changes observed and analyzed by the researcher and experienced by the participants in terms of reading comprehension when identifying main ideas demonstrated that tiered products were an effective tool to help students overcome comprehension difficulties becoming active readers able to construct meaning from the text.

Findings

At this point, the above-mentioned categories emerged along with the subcategories are presented, explained and directly related to the theoretical background analyzed for this study.

Category 1: Fostering motivation towards reading. The first category emerged from the participants' perceptions towards the implementation of tiered products. These perceptions were disclosed by means of the data analysis. For instance, interviews transcriptions uncovered students' positive ways of feeling: (motivated, creative, enthusiastic, etc.) as a result of the tiered product development. Additionally, the learning logs depicted how free participants felt to make decisions on how to represent the main ideas of a fictional text and how this motivated them to read. Therefore, these perceptions depicted traits of motivation to reading as an effect of the tiered product implementation. Actually, based on the data analysis conducted so far, such traits of motivation can be labeled as creativity and decision- making which enclose these motivational insights and simultaneously become the sub-categories within this category.

Subcategory: decision-making. This subcategory emerged from what students expressed in the semi- structured interviews and the information written in the learning logs. As the participants had the opportunity of choosing what to do and how to do it, they felt free to take control over the development of their products and the materials they wanted to explore and use. Therefore, the perceptions portrayed a decision- making process as part of motivation to reading. The following excerpt from a semi- structured interview supports this decision- making process as part of the participants' motivation:

Teacher: ¿Cómo te sentiste haciendo ese producto?
Student 17: pues… muy feliz y motivada…además porque pues cada uno expreso su método y todo eso y pues yo me sentí muy feliz porque hice lo que yo quería y aprendí a mi modo.
T: ¿Por qué dices eso de aprender a mi modo?
S17: porque ehhhh soy responsable de lo que hago en.. con el.. ehh producto en reading.

Figure 5. Excerpt from 1st Semi-Structured Interview. October 5th, 2012. Lines 13 to 14 Student17

As it can be noticed, this participant exhibited decision-making features as to the acceptance of her responsibility for the tiered product. In fact, she seemed to be aware of the decision she made and its effect on her learning. As pointed out by Orlich and Harder (2010), "Implicit within the concept of decision-making, is the notion of responsibility so if a learner makes a decision, he must be willing to take responsibility for both implementation and outcome" (p. 16). In other words, this participant realized that the selection of a product would represent the control over the development of her product and at the same time it would bring feelings of satisfaction and motivation when reading.

Another sample taken from a learning log also depicted how the tiered product development fostered learners' motivation to reading, allowing them to control over their learning experience.

Why did I choose that product to represent the main idea?
Because I feel in liberty because I do what I want to represent a main idea with materials that I need.
How does what I have been doing help me in reading?
That can help me because I want to read more to do products more.

Figure 6. Excerpt from Learning log # 4, Student # 10- Nov 9th, 2012

As mentioned above, this excerpt illustrates motivation on behalf of the participant as he regards the product as an opportunity to read more. Hence, the tiered products played a relevant role as a trigger for learners to have the desire to read more stories in order to make more products. Along with this desire, the fact of making decisions upon the materials to represent the main idea generated a sense of independence for this learner, what was a motivating factor for him as well.

Still within the realms of decision- making as part of motivation to reading, another excerpt from an interview supports choices as a way to engage learners in reading.

1. *T: ¿Cómo te sentiste haciendo ese producto?*
2. *S5: me sentí muy feliz porque me pareció divertido y al mismo tiempo educativo y*
3. *a mi me encanta leer y los productos me llevan a leer más.*

Figure 7. Excerpt from 1st Semi-Structured Interview. October 5th, 2012. Lines 11 to 13
Student 5.

This excerpt validates the fact that "allowing young children to make even a minimal task choice increased learning from the task and enhanced subsequent interest in the activity"

(Cordova & Lepper, 1996). In this case, this participant has come to understand that through

tiered products, he can have fun and read for enjoyment as one of his likes. So, this suggests that

providing learners with product choices increase engagement and commitment to reading.

Subcategory: creativity. This subcategory illustrates participants' tendency to

generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems,

communicating with others, and entertaining themselves and others (Franken, 2007). Throughout

the implementation, the participants were given a reading text from which they were supposed to

find the main idea and represent it as they wanted by choosing a tiered product from a list of

options presented by the teacher- researcher. Some participants selected those products based on

the entertainment they would be able to provide to the audience when presenting their products.

For instance, the excerpt below taken from a learning log portrays the participant's need to be

creative by providing others with entertainment.

What did I do to represent the main idea of the text?
I made a puppet show with some all socks, paper, markers and buttons. (imagination was
the main component)
Why did I choose that product to represent the main idea?
Because, nobody did it and I thought it was going to be funny to entertain others.

Figure 8. Excerpt from Learning log # 3, Student # 2- October 5th, 2012

As it is observable in the excerpt placed above, creativity is an element that third graders

regarded as relevant when selecting their products and it is a motivation factor that facilitated the

representation of the main ideas. As stated by Heacox (2002), one of the authorities of

differentiated instruction, "promoting creativity through differentiated instruction (tiered

products) affords each student the opportunity and motivation to truly demonstrate their learning,

skills, and abilities" (p. 78). In this particular case, the creativity exhibited by this participant gave him the chance to personalize his product and use his imagination to create a puppet show that could entertain others. What is more, being creative was an important motivating force for this participant to represent the main idea of the fiction story.

Another excerpt that validated creativity as a significant factor for the selection of the tiered products by the participants was taken from an interview:

T: ¿Por qué elegiste ese producto?
S7: yo quise hacer ese experimento de imanes porque nadie lo había hecho y eso iba a ser creativo ... nadie lo iba hacer...solo yo...y me iba a representar la idea mejor porque la main idea era sobre magnets.

Figure 9. Excerpt from 1ª Semi-Structured Interview. October 5th, 2012. Lines 5 to 8 Student 13)

As it can be noticed above, this participant's desire to be creative led him to decide on a product that represented the main idea as clearly as possible showing others his abilities to be original and accurate in the identification of main ideas. As such, creativity could be perceived as an influential factor for participants when determining their products to illustrate their understanding of main ideas.

Keeping with the same vein of thought, creativity can also be framed within the scope of learners' preferences and likes. For instance, the following excerpt taken from a semi-structured interview, portrays how a participant made up her own product based on her preferences.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

> **1.** **T:** Ok ¿puedes explicar el producto que acabaste de hacer?
> **2.** **S17:** ehh yo hice un radio y lo escogí porque porque me gusta ser creativa mucho ehh y pues… ehh me inventé un radio que se llama reading radio ehh y ahí supuestamente en ese radio leen historias a los niños y pues… ehh… después en otros como… como puedo decirlo ehhh en otras…en otros tiempos pues ehh ya les explican la central idea pues otro día otra cosa y después vuelven a leer otra historia.
> **5.T:** ¿Por qué elegiste hacer ese producto?
> **10.S11:** Yo elegí hacer el producto ese producto porque me pareció muy divertido y me gusta mucho escuchar la radio ……
> **13. T:** ahh Ok ¿Cómo te sentiste haciendo ese producto?
> **14. S17:** pues… muy feliz y motivada a leer y además me sentí un artista, me sentí una lectora también porque a mi me encanta leer.

Figure 10. Excerpt from 1st Semi-Structured Interview. October 5th, 2012. Lines 8 to 14 Student 5)

From the data presented above, it was clear that this participant's likes about radio shows led her to decide on her product and be creative by doing something completely different to represent the main idea. As a matter of fact, her creativity involved effort and work to make of this product something meaningful and motivating enough to feel herself an artist and a reader. This was also evidenced in an observation made by the researcher in a rubric (See Appendix D) that served as a tool to analyze the participants' artifacts (tiered products).

> **Rubric observation**
>
> This student presented a radio show. This product was created by her and it was not included in the list provided by the teacher- researcher. She explained very clearly the main idea giving supporting details. She brought a lot of materials to set up the radio show. She really looked motivated and enthusiastic.

Figure 11. Excerpt from Rubric- Student # 16, cycle 3.

As noted above, during her presentation this participant accurately identified the main idea of the story and explained such idea by means of a tiered product created by her as a result of her preferences and evident motivation (See Appendix O).

Category 2: Developing meaning-building skills in reading. This category pinpoints the effects that the implementation of tiered products had on third graders' reading comprehension process. These effects were given in terms of the development of meaning-building skills such as conceptualizing and understanding main ideas and making connections to real life. These sub-categories reflected how the tiered products benefited the reading comprehension process helping the participants identify the main ideas and extract reading themes as central messages related to their own lives (Graesser, Pomeroy, & Craig, 2002).

As previously stated in the theoretical framework, reading comprehension is an act influenced by three elements: the reader, the text and the activity (Walpole & Mackenna, 2007). Accordingly, the development of these meaning-building skills happened through the interaction among the participants, the text and the tiered products, and when reading and activating prior knowledge and experiences to understand what they were reading.

Subcategory: conceptualization and understanding of main ideas. As indicated in the theoretical framework, students' brains need to be trained to sculpt main ideas through different formulas or strategies (Zwiers, 2010). In this case, the tiered products proved to be a useful tool for participants to understand the concept of main idea and to be able to locate it in fiction stories. Here, there is an excerpt from a learning log to exemplify this sub-category.

What did I learn about reading when making my product?
I learn that a main idea is different of a summary.
How does what I have been doing help me in reading?
These products helped me learn that main ideas are not long paragraphs because before this I made huge main ideas like summaries.

Figure 12. Excerpt from Learning Log # 4, student # 11, November 14th, 2012

As noticed above, this participant's perception towards a main idea was modified as a result of the development of the tiered product. Tomlinson (1999), a leading expert on differentiation, asserts that differentiated strategies applied to reading may be designed to help students learn a range of skills including comprehension (Tomlinson, 1999, p. 56). In this case, the implementation of tiered products helped participants distinguish between a summary and a main idea by understanding that these two reading skills are different. Actually, in the sample, this student made a clear distinction between these two concepts when he said that main ideas are not long paragraphs like summaries. This clearly corroborates what Tomlinson (2012) states: "students learn more efficiently if allowed to acquire knowledge and express their understanding through a mode of their choice" (p. 5). Accordingly, as the participants had the opportunity to demonstrate their learning by means of different products which they chose freely according to their learning styles, their identification of main ideas became more effective.

In effect, this enhancement of main idea identification was also evidenced in the rubrics used to analyze the artifacts. The bar graph below indicates how throughout the implementation, the participants showed an evolving improvement in relation to this reading skill.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Figure 13
Implementation Four Cycles
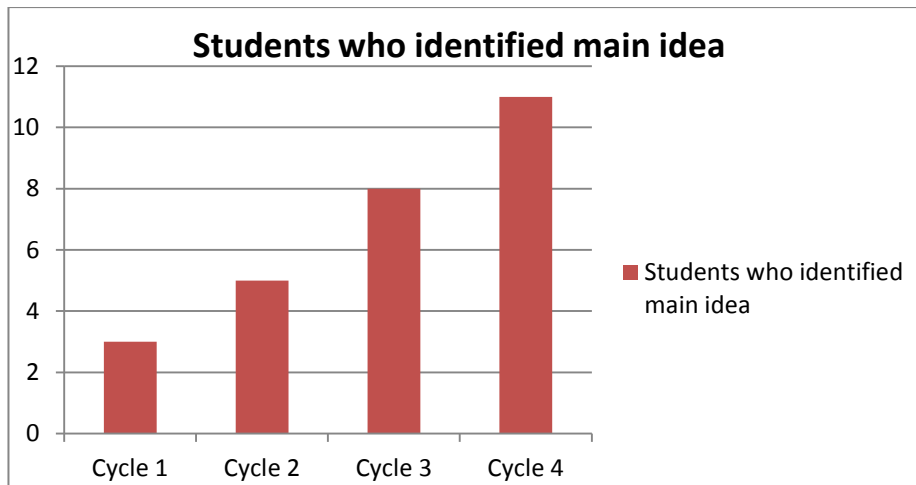
The above analysis was possible as the rubrics presented specific criteria for rating students' identification of main ideas. Consequently, this tool allowed the researcher to keep track of participants' progress and make observations based on the students' performance.

Finally, another sample taken from an interview shows how a tiered product made by a participant fostered understanding of main ideas among the group of students.

> T: ¿Cómo logras identificar una idea principal?
> S7: con la concept Wheel de Juandi o pensando sobre que se trató la historia
> T: aja ¿Pero tú qué hiciste para identificar la idea osea tu entendiste eso y?
> S7: por quien fue, donde fue, que hizo, como se hizo y cuando se hizo osea lo que dice la concept Wheel.

Figure 14. Excerpt from 2nd Semi-Structured Interview. November 21st, 2012. Lines 9 to 12 Student 7)

The aforementioned excerpt corroborates the fact that tiered products implementation facilitates the participants' identification of main ideas. As it can be noticed, this student asserted

that he understood a main idea due to the graphic organizer (See appendix P) made by his classmate as a product of the first cycle of this pedagogical intervention. Such product was a "concept wheel" that included five main elements (what, who, why, where and how) to find a main idea.

   Sub-category: making connections with real life. This sub- category deals with the understanding and meaning constructed by the participants when reading and presenting their tiered products. As   Keene and Zimmerman (1997) concluded, students comprehend better a text when they make different kinds of connections: text-to-self, text-to-text and text-to-world. In this case, students were able to make text-to-self connections as highly personal constructions made between the fiction stories and their own experiences of life to find out the central messages (themes) conveyed by the texts and build meaning attaining reading comprehension. The following excerpt taken from an interview exemplifies this sub- category:

T: ¿Para qué te sirve hacer productos como los que hemos venido haciendo en clase?

S5: para poder... para no solo decir la idea principal, por ejemplo que Martha tenía una colección de inanes que le ayudaron a hacer amigos, sino también decir lo que aprendí de la historia. Por ejemplo, en Marthas' magets yo... aprendí sobre la importancia de ser buen ehhh buen amigo prestando mis cosas a otro en clase.

Figure 15. Excerpt from 1st Semi-Structured Interview. October 5th, 2012. Lines 9 to 13 Student 5)

   From the sample above, it is clear that this participant could identify not only the main idea but also the central message the story. This theme about the relevance of friendship was not explicitly stated in the story but the participant engaged in a construction process. It means that, he inferred the theme conveyed in the text by relating the central topic of the story to his own life

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

(Zwaan, Radvansky, & Whitten, 2002).Therefore, the identification of main ideas led this student to the construction of this connection.

Another sample that validates this connection-making skill comes from a participant's learning log:

What did I learn when making my product?
I learn that everyone is good at something. For example, Ronald was good at making friends in the story and I am good at telling jokes.

Figure 16. Excerpt from Learning Log # 1, student # 11, September 14th, 2012

In this case, this participant generated personal connections to the story based on what Derry (1996) calls "memory objects". They are small units of knowledge and experiences perceived by the reader to relate to the theme. Consequently, this students' previous knowledge of the main idea and his own experience guided him to the discovery and comprehension of the reading theme of the story. This sample was also supported by an observation made by the researcher in the rubric of this participant:

Rubric observation

The students made a news program where she incorporated the main idea and connected it to the importance of recognizing that everyone is good at something. She mentioned that she is good at telling jokes.

Figure 17. Excerpt from Rubric- Student # 13, cycle 3.

As observed above, this student represented the main idea by means of her tiered product making connections to her real experience and consequently generating the reading theme of the story.

Another example to illustrate how participants made connections to the fictional stories to get understanding of the main ideas was an excerpt taken from a learning log.

What did I do to represent the main idea of the text?
I think of my mom working in a hospital and the story she told me about children with down and I decided to make a
Brochure to represent that Rosie was a dog that helped sick people like my mom because she has many brochures to
Show deceases to other people.

Figure 18. Excerpt from Learning Log # 4, student # 17, September 25th, 2012

As it can be observed in the excerpt above, the participant made a text-to-self connection by relating the story to an event in her life to better understand the main idea of the story and to decide on the best way to represent it. Certainly, when participants related what they read to something that happened to them, they were able to comprehend deeply.

What has been described and explained so far in this chapter encloses the process of evaluating data from various sources using analytical and interpretive reasoning to generate categories and sub-categories that allowed the researcher to answer the research question posed at the beginning of the research process.

Chapter 6

Conclusions, Pedagogical Implications, Limitations and Further Research

After explaining the categories, interpreting data and presenting the findings obtained from the data gathered, it is time to put across the major conclusions that arose at the end of this research study, the limitations, pedagogical implications and finally suggestions for educational further research.

Conclusions

Bearing in mind that this research project was aimed at exploring third graders' identification of main ideas through the implementation of tiered products, the data gathered, reviewed and analyzed allowed the researcher to identify a core category integrated by two categories to respond the main research question: *What may the implementation of tiered products for differentiated instruction reveal about third graders' identification of main ideas when reading fiction stories?*

This core category "*Growing as an active reader*" disclosed how the implementation of tiered products enhanced the reading comprehension process by first "*Fostering Motivation towards Reading"* as participants depicted certain motivational features to reading that came up as result of learners' freedom to choose and develop their tiered products according to their individual preferences. This motivation factors were **decision-making and creativity.** In fact, participants felt more motivated and engaged in reading and finding main ideas as they could select their products to represent such ideas by exploring different materials and being as creative as they wanted.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Secondly, the reading comprehension process was boosted as students could "***Develop meaning-building skills in reading"*** such as conceptualizing and understanding main ideas and making connections to real life. In other words, the development of tiered products allowed participants to gain understanding of the concept of main idea and have the opportunity to experience different paths to comprehension. What is more, students came to recognize the themes (central messages) of the stories and make connections to their real life experiences and contexts.

From what has been claimed above, the researcher concluded that the implementation of tiered products during reading instruction enhanced the participants' identification of main ideas by fostering motivation towards reading, developing meaning-building skills (understanding main ideas and making connections to real life), and subsequently boosting the reading comprehension process. In this case, the use of tiered products as a way to differentiate reading instruction helped students grow as active readers able to identify main ideas and activate their schemata. In doing so they were also able to bring their background knowledge and experience to the text generating meaning and comprehension.

Additionally, the results indicated that tiered products were a useful tool to foster motivation in the participants when reading. According to Kamil, Manning and Walberg (2002), "motivation is not a mere auxiliary to the process of reading comprehension, motivation actually fuels reading achievement" (p. 149). In other words, tiered products triggered motivation towards reading helping the students find main ideas and improve reading comprehension.

On a closer look, the implementation of tiered products proved to be an effective strategy to foster reading comprehension skills and motivation supporting the performance of students before, during, and after reading. Such an experience really helped students develop essential

skills for understanding and extracting meaning from text and boost their performance on reading comprehension.

It is also worth mentioning that the findings in this research study provided similar insights from the ones reported in previous studies. Meeting the needs of all students in today classrooms can be challenging. However, the implementation of differentiated instruction strategies in the elementary classroom with an emphasis on reading supports all learners in the classroom, regardless of their academic abilities, learning styles, interests, personalities, background knowledge, or experiences.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings obtained in this research study have implications at different levels for education in the EFL and ESL contexts. First of all, in the EFL and ESL classrooms reading is an essential skill for success in school and in life so learners' preferences and likes must not be overlooked when nurturing growth and motivation in reading. Actually, teachers need to provide a variety of learning alternatives for their children in their classes, using different teaching strategies, and materials (Saracho, 1997, p. 171). By providing different choices, teachers not only cater for different students' needs but also allow learners to demonstrate what they have come to understand and learn when reading.

Another implication of this project in terms of teaching has to do with the input provided to students when reading. It is essential to help the students understand reading comprehension as a highly active process that requires more than decoding and encoding reading material. As a matter of fact, for tiered products to become an effective reading strategy, it is necessary to provide enough opportunities for learners to use them as part of their reading instruction on a continuous basis. In doing so, teachers must previously detect learners' profiles as to learning

styles and interests to be able to create a list of tiered products that really aid learners to show understanding of a particular reading skill.

At the curriculum level, differentiated instruction should be incorporated in the EFL classroom to set a positive and inclusive learning environment that acknowledges learner diversity. As pointed out by Tomlinson (1999), "in differentiated classrooms, teachers provide specific ways for each individual to learn as deeply as possible, without assuming one student's road map for learning is identical to anyone else's" (p. 3). In other words, instruction delivered by teachers should include varied content, different learning strategies such as tiered products to reach all learners fostering motivation and increasing reading comprehension.

As to learning, it is worth mentioning that when students are provided with opportunities to choose how they want to work and to express how they feel concerning the task or activities, they learn more efficiently expressing their understanding through a mode of their choice. Thus, motivation increases and reading becomes a pleasure. In fact, allowing young children to make even a minimal task choice increases learning from the task and enhances subsequent interest in the activity (Cordova & Lepper, 1996).

Finally, it is recommended to ensure and explicitly instruct the learners on the creation of tiered products as a process of growth where they are required to engage in a meaning-building process to arrive at a particular concept or understanding. That is to say, learners should regard a tiered product as way to construct and represent knowledge rather than a simple activity to get a good grade.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Limitations

Throughout this study, the researcher faced some obstacles that interfered with the appropriate development of the research process. These limitations had to do with time constraints, the local studies available for the study, methodological difficulties, and unforeseen circumstances.

Sometimes, the hours devoted to the English reading class per week were not enough to develop all the activities the researcher wanted to implement with the participants. Such lack of time was product of classroom visits done by the English coordinator. In order to overcome this constraint, some cycles were shortened and adjusted to the time available. It is worth mentioning that making some of the cycles briefer did not affect the results of the implementation.

Apart from that, the researcher also tackled problems with the local studies available to enrich her study since the majority of studies were international and not so connected to the research phenomenon at hand. In order to solve this predicament, the researcher looked for local studies that somehow were correlated to the underlying constructs of the current study and took information from them to validate the need of conducting research on differentiated strategies for reading comprehension.

As to methodological difficulties, the researcher found herself redesigning one of the data instruments while implementing the pedagogical intervention. In the first cycle, the data gathered from the artifacts could not be profitably analyzed since the rubric used to analyze such artifacts lacked of a column for further insights and comments coming from the researcher's observations. At the beginning, this situation affected the data analysis process, but gradually this improved with the inclusion of the missing column in the data collection instrument allowing the researcher to get the most out of the data.

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Lastly, the researcher had to go through different circumstances she did not expect to take place in the course of the research. For instance, the cycles were prepared but they could not be implemented due to some school activities and unexpected events.

Furthermore, sometimes some participants of this study did not attend school; their absence delayed the implementation and did not permit the research process to be conducted as it was planned. However, those predicaments were overcome by rescheduling some tiered products presentations and sending home some activities to allow the participants to catch up and complete the cycles.

Further Research

Taking into consideration the findings discussed above, other teacher-researchers can continue to examine differentiated instruction and reading from two different perspectives. The first one could be going back to the English classrooms to observe the fostering of autonomy features or behaviors through the use of differentiated strategies such as flexible grouping or learning centers. The second one could be to explore the effects of differentiation of content and instruction on learners' reading comprehension.

Some questions that may also contribute to the development or further research for any teacher who desires to make progress inside the classroom when dealing with reading and differentiated instruction could be:

- What are the effects of using differentiated strategies on learners' reading achievement?

- What impact does the use of tiered instruction have on students' cooperative learning?

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Another opportunity to conduct research might be an interesting outlier emerged far outside from the central phenomenon under study. The data analysis sometimes contained information that gave account of the participants acquiring new words as a result of making and presenting their tiered products when identifying main ideas. As such, this vocabulary increase can be regarded as potential focus of inquiry for further research.

Finally, it is also advisable for the educational community to embark on the process of conducting research on tiered products as a strategy to support and enhance writing and speaking skills, activating students' learning styles and allowing them to make their own choices based on personal preferences and interests.

References

Adams, C., Pierce, R., & Pierce, L. (2006). *Differentiating Instruction: A Practical Guide to Tiered Lessons in the Elementary Grades.* United States of America. Library of congress cataloging –in-Publication Data.

Baumgartner, T., Lipowski, M., & Rush, C. (2003, May 1). *Increasing Reading Achievement of Primary and Middle School Students through Differentiated instruction.* Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Blachowicz, C. & Ogle, D. (2008).*Reading Comprehension: Strategies for Independent Learners.* United States of America. Library of congress cataloging –in-Publication Data.

Bender, W.N., (2008). *Differentiating instruction for students with learning disabilities: best teaching practices for general and special educators*. London. Corwin Press.

Benjamin, A. (2003). *Differentiated Instruction: A Guide for Elementary School Teachers*. United States of America. Library of congress cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Brown, D (2009) *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, Pearson education.

Buehl, D. (2009).*Classroom Strategies for Interactive Learning.* United States of America. . Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data

Burns, A. (1999). *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teacher.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Chapman, C & King, R. (2009) *Differentiated Instructional Strategies for Reading in the Content Areas.* United States of America. Corwin Press.

Cohen, L., Manion, K & Morrison, J. (2007). *Research Methods in Education.* United States of

America. Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Colegio Bilingüe Buckingham (2002). Manual de Convivencial Institucional.

Conklin, W. (2009). *Applying Differentiation Strategies*. Hunhington Beach. Shell Education

Cordova, D., & Lepper, M. (1996). *Intrinsic motivation and the process of learning. Beneficial effects of contextualization, personalization, and choice*. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 88,* 715-730.

Cousin, G. (2009).*Researching Learning in Higher Education: An Introduction to Contemporary Methods and Approaches*. New York. Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data

Craig, D. (2009). *Action Research Essentials.* Library of congress Cataloging –in-Publication Data. United States of America.

Derry, S.J. (1996). *Cognitive schema theory in the constructivist debate*. Educational Psychologist, 31, 163-174.

Drapeau, P. (2004). *Differentiated Instruction: Making It Work: A Practical Guide to Planning, Managing, and Implementing Differentiated Instruction to Meet the Needs of All Learners*. Scholastic.

Flaherty, S., & Hackler, R. (2010, May 1). *Exploring the Effects of Differentiated Instruction and Cooperative Learning on the Intrinsic Motivational Behaviors of Elementary Reading Students*. Online Submission, Retrieved from EBSCOhost.

Franken, R. (2007). *Human Motivation*. United States of America. Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Freeman, D. (1998). *Doing Teacher- Research: From Inquiry to Understanding*. Canada. Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Gibson, V. (2011). *Differentiating Instruction: Teaching Differently to Improve*

   reading Instruction. Minnesota. Read Naturally. Retrieved from

   http://www.readnaturally.com/pdf/differentiating-instruction-wp.pdf

Gilakjani, A., & Ahmadi, S. (2011). *The relationship between 12 reading comprehension and*

   schema theory: A matter of text familiarity. International Journal of Information and

   *Education Technolo*gy. Retrieved from http://www.ijiet.org/papers/24-K002.pdf

Glass, K. (2009). *Lesson Design for Differentiated Instruction, Grades 4-9.* United States of

   America. . Corwin Press.

Graesser, A., Pomeroy, V., & Craig, S. (2002). *Psychological and computational research*

   on theme comprehension. In M. Louwerse & W. van Peer (Eds.), Thematics:

   Interdisciplinary studies (pp. 19-34). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Good, Melinda (2006, May). *Differentiated Instruction: Principles and Techniques for the*

   Elementary Grades. Retrieved October 31, 2011, from

http://www.ascd.org/research-a-topic/differentiated- instruction-resources.aspx#research.

Gregory,G & Chapman, C. (2007) *Differentiated instructional strategies: one size doesn't fit all*.

   California. Corwin Press.

 Heacox, D, (2002). Differentiating instruction in the regular classroom: how to reach and teach

   all learners, Grades 3-12. Minneapolis. Free Spirit Publishing Inc.

Heacox, D., & Wormeli, R (2009). *Making Differentiation a Habit: How to Ensure Success in*
Academically diverse classrooms. Minneapolis. Copyright

International Baccalaureate Organization (2002). *Diploma Programme Language* b. Geneva,

   Switzerland: International Baccalaureate Organization. Retrieved from

    http://www.holyhearthigh.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/FrenchB-2012.pdf

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Kamil, M., Manning, J., & Walberg, H. (2002). *Successful reading instruction*. United

States of America. Library of congress cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Keene, E. & Zimmerman, S. (1997). *Mosaic of Thought*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Koeze, P. (2007). *Differentiated instruction: the effect on student achievement in an elementary

school.* Theses and Doctoral Dissertations paper 31. Retrieved November 2, 2011 from

http://commons.emich.edu/theses/31.

Mack, N., & MacQueen, K. (2005).*Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field

Guide.* United States of America. Family Health International.

Macnamara, D. (2007) *Reading comprehension strategies: theories, interventions, and

technologies.* Taylor & Francis group, LLC.

McArdle, Geri. (1991). *Developing Instructional Design : A Step-by-Step Guide to Success.*

California. Crisp Publications, Inc.

Merriam, S. (2009). *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*.

Education.   San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

O'Connor, R & Vadasy, P (2011).*Handbook of Reading Interventions*. New York . The Guilford

press.

Olmos, M., & Cruz, M. (2001). *Reading Strategies for Young Learners*. Universidad

Distrital Francisco Jose de Caldas.

O'Meara, J. (2010). *Beyond Differentiated Instruction.* California. Corwin press.

Orlich, D., and Harder, R. (2010). *Teaching Strategies: A Guide to Effective Instruction.*

Boston. Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Pierce, R.,& Adams, A (2004). *Tiered Lessons: One way to Differentiate Mathematics

Instruction* Spring, vol, 27 No 2, p. 58-66.

Rasinski, T., Brassell, D., Yopp, H. (2008). *Comprehension That Works: Taking Students Beyond Ordinary Understanding to deep comprehension*. Huntington Beach. Corinne Burton, M.A. Ed.

Reid, J. (1995) Learning Styles in the ESL/EFL classroom. Boston Massachusetts: Heinle & Heinle Publishers. United States: Cambridge University Press.

Roe, B., & Smith, S. (2009). *Teaching Reading in today's Elementary Schools*. United States of America. Library of Congress.

Rogers, A. (2005). *Students' voice: Bridges to Learning. Seattle*: University of Washington.

Sadeghi, N. (2012). *Learning Styles, Personality Types and Reading Comprehension Performance. English Language Teaching*. Vol 5. N°4; April 2012. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n4p116

Sagor, R. (2011). *The Action Research Guidebook: A Four-Stage Process for Educators and School Teams*. Corwin. United States of America.

Saracho, O. (1997). *Teachers' and Students' Cognitive Styles in Early Childhood*. United States of America. Library of congress cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Snow, C.E., (2002). *Reading for understanding: Toward a research and development program in reading comprehension*. Pittsburgh. RAND Corporation.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research. Grounded theory procedures and techniques.* London: Siege Publications.

Strong, R. W., Silver, H. F., and Perini, M. J. (2001). *Making students as important as standards.Educational Leadership*, 59(3), 56-61.

Suter, W. (2011). *Introduction to Educational Research: A Critical Thinking Approach.* United

States of America. Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Tomal, D. (2010). *Action Research for Educators.* Library of congress Cataloging –in-

Publication Data. United States of America.

Tomlinson, C. *Differentiation of instruction in the elementary grades*. Retrieved March,26, 2012

from http://www.ed.gov/database/ERIC_Digests/ed443572.htlm

Tomlinson, C., Callahan, C., & Brighton, C. (1997). *Differentiating Instruction in Response to*

Student Readiness, Interest, and Learning Profile in Academically Diverse Classrooms: A

Review of Literature. Journal for the Education of the Gifted. Retrieved from

https://moodle.emu.edu/pluginfile.php/95452/mod_resource/content/1/7su.pdf

Tomlinson,C., & Eidson, C. (2003). *Differentiation in practice: A resource guide for*

differentiating curriculum, Grades 5-9. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and

Curriculum Development.

Tomlinson, C. A., (2001). *How to differentiate instruction in mixed-ability classrooms.* (2nd Ed.)

Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

Tomlinson, C. A. (1999). *The differentiated classroom*: *Responding to the needs of all learners*.

Alexandria, Virginia: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Wallace, Catherine. (1992). Reading. New York. Oxford University Press.

Walpole,S., & McKenna, M (2007)*Differentiated reading instruction: strategies for the primary*

grades. United States of America. The Guilford Press.

Wiley, J. (2010). *Methods in Educational Research: From Theory to Practice*. United States of

America. Library of congress Cataloging –in- Publication Data.

Willis, J. (2008).*Qualitative Research Methods in Education and Educational Technology*.

United States of America. Copyright Information Age Publishing Inc.

Woolley, G (2011). *Reading Comprehension*: *Assisting Children with Learning Difficulties*.

Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg. London New York.

Worthy, J. & McKool, S. (1996). Students who say they hate to read: The importance of

opportunity, choice, and access. In D.J. Leu, C.K. Kinzer, & K.A. Hinchman (Eds.),

Literacies for the 21st century: Research and practice. 45th yearbook of the National

Reading Conference (pp. 245-256). Chicago: National Reading Conference.

Zwaan, R.A., Radvansky, G.A., Whitten, S.N. (2002). Situation models and themes. In

M. Louwerse & W. van Peer (Eds.), Thematics: Interdisciplinary studies (pp. 35-

53). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Zwiers, J. (2010).*Building Reading Comprehension Habits in Grades 6-12: A Toolkit of

Classroom activities.* United States of America. Library of congress cataloging –in-

Publication Data

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Questionnaire

COLEGIO BILINGÜE BUCKINGHAM
ENCUESTA
LENGUA EXTRANJERA (INGLÉS)

OBJETIVO: Esta encuesta tiene como objetivo identificar las maneras en que te gusta aprender la lengua extranjera (inglés) y a su vez las posibles dificultades que se te presentan en este aprendizaje. Por favor, responde las siguientes preguntas cuidadosamente.

Nombre: _____ Curso: _____ Edad: _____ Género: M_____ F_____

POR FAVOR RESPONDE CON UNA EQUIS (X) LA(S) RESPUESTA(S) QUE CONSIDERES ADECUADA(S):

1. ¿Cuál de las siguientes habilidades del inglés te parece más difícil?

a. Habla   b. Escucha   c. Lectura   d. Escritura

¿Por qué? _____
_____

2. ¿Cuándo estás en la clase de inglés, qué actividades prefieres realizar?

a. Ver un video
b. Cantar una canción
c. Escribir una historia
d. Hacer un dibujo.
e. Leer
f. Hacer crucigramas, etc etc

3. En las actividades prefieres trabajar en

a. Grupo
b. Individualmente
c. Pareja

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

4. ¿En cuál de las habilidades comunicativas te sientes más seguro?

a. Habla   b. Escucha   c. Lectura   d. Escritura

¿Por qué? _____

_____

5. Cuando quieres comunicarte en inglés y no puedes, ¿qué te lo impide?

a. Falta de vocabulario
b. Miedo a hablar en público
c. Miedo a cometer errores.
d. No sabes cómo armar las oraciones.
e. Sabes lo que quieres decir, pero no sabes cómo pronunciarlo.
Otro.   ¿Cuál? _____
¿Por qué? _____

_____

6. ¿Cuáles actividades te gusta realizar para mejorar la comunicación oral?

a. Hacer presentaciones orales
b. Escuchar canciones y / o conversaciones
c. Leer cuentos en inglés
d. Ver programas de televisión o películas en inglés.

Otro. ¿Cuál? _____

7. En el desarrollo de las actividades de clase te gusta tener:

a. Tiempo ilimitado para desarrollar las actividades
b. Tiempo limitado para desarrollar las actividades

¿Por qué? _____
_____

8. ¿Qué estrategias utilizas cuando no entiendes una instrucción en inglés?

a. Buscas la ayuda de un compañero
b. Preguntas nuevamente al profesor /a
c. Buscas palabras desconocidas en un diccionario

9. ¿Qué tipo de libros en ingles te gusta leer?

a. Libros de ficción
b. Cuentos

    c.   Fábulas
    d.   Tiras cómicas

10. Cuando estás leyendo en inglés ¿Qué se te dificulta más?

    a.   Entender el vocabulario
    b.   Encontrar la idea principal
    c.   Identificar los personajes principales.

11. ¿Cómo te sientes cuando no terminas una actividad a tiempo?

_____

_____

12. Cuando te asignas una actividad, tÚ

    a.   Terminas antes del tiempo establecido
    b.   Terminas a tiempo
    c.   No terminas a tiempo

13. Cuando el profesor / a explica un tema nuevo

    a.   Necesitas solo una explicación
    b.   Más de una explicación
    c.   Tres o más explicaciones

Appendix B

Sample of a Tiered Lesson

Subject:	Mathematics
Grade:	Third
Standard:	#5 Geometry and #6 Spatial Sense
Key Concept:	Students work with geometric shapes and develop spatial sense.
Generalization:	Students identify lines of symmetry of objects.
Background:	This would be the fourth or fifth lesson in a unit on geometry where the first few lessons have covered various geometric shapes, as well as slides, flips, turns, congruence, and symmetry.
Tier I:	*Kinesthetic Learners* Pairs of students use brightly colored paper to make several simple origami designs. Provide guidance when necessary. When students are finished, have them unfold the figure(s), find any congruent figures, and identify lines of symmetry. Students then share the origami figures and have classmates try to construct them.
Tier II:	*Visual Learners* Pairs of students work with pictures of items from nature, such as a butterfly, sunflower, rainbow, snowflake, or starfish. Students find any congruent figures and identify lines of symmetry for each item. Students color the pictures to help show the lines of symmetry. Students cut out the figures and have classmates find the lines of symmetry.
Assessment:	Use a summative assessment noting students' abilities to identify the congruent figures and lines of symmetry. Have each student reflect in writing about congruent figures and lines of symmetry. From a list of objects in the classroom, students will select an object and write about whether or not the object has congruent parts, lines of symmetry, or both and then explain why. The students could also include a drawing that illustrates the congruent parts, lines of symmetry, or both.

Taken from Pierce, R., & Adams, A (2004).

Appendix C

Semi- Structured Interview

You are kindly invited to answer these questions. Remember that the information provided will be confidential.

MAIN QUESTIONS	CLARIFYING QUESTIONS
1. When reading a story, can you identify the main idea?	How do you do it?
2. Can you explain your product?	Can you explain a little bit more?
3. Why did you choose that product?	Can you give some examples?
4. What steps did you follow in order to get your product done?	What will you change next time?
5. What are those products useful for?	
6. How did you feel making the product?	

Appendix D
Rubric

Category			
Identifies Main Ideas in Reading	The student attempts to identify the main idea however, the main idea is stated incorrectly	The student identifies the main idea correctly, and includes some supporting details.	The student clearly and accurately identifies the main idea and includes most of the relevant supporting details
Evidence	The product is not clear and does not reflect the main idea	The product is clear and at least partially reflects the main idea	The product is complete and accurately reflects the main idea

Observations:

**EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION
THROUGH**

Appendix E

Learning Log

Learning log #

Date:

- What did I do to represent the main idea of the text?

- How do I think/feel about this?

- What did I learn?

- What will I do differently next time?

- How will I do it differently next time?

- How does what I have been doing lead me to become better at identifying main ideas?

- How can I use this to identify main ideas in future readings?

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Appendix F

Consent Letter from parents

COLEGIO BILINGÜE BUCKINGHAM

Formato de Autorización – Padres de Familia

Bogotá,D.C. Septiembre X, 2012

Proyecto de Educación: "Explorando el proceso de comprensión de lectura a través de la implementación de estrategias diferenciadas"

Maestría en didáctica del Inglés con énfasis en ambientes de aprendizaje autónomo

Señores Padres de Familia – Estudiantes tercer Grado

Ciudad

Respetados Padres de Familia:

Teniendo en cuenta el perfil internacional de la institución y la implementación de la diferenciación como estrategia pedagógica en el aula de clase, se pretende llevar a cabo un proyecto educativo llamado "Explorando el proceso de comprensión de lectura a través de la implementación de estrategias diferenciadas" dirigido a estudiantes de tercer grado, con el propósito de implementar estrategias de diferenciación que faciliten el proceso de lectura en la lengua extranjera.

Durante la implementación de este proyecto, los estudiantes desarrollarán algunas actividades y talleres guiados por el profesor. Igualmente, se grabarán y entrevistarán a los niños durante las clases. Cabe mencionar que la ejecución de este proyecto no entorpecerá ni atrasará la planeación de clases o actividades inherentes al currículo del área y tampoco tendrá incidencia alguna en las notas correspondientes al curso.

A los participantes se les garantiza estricta confidencialidad con la información que se obtenga y completa anonimidad.

Para que quede constancia que conocen esta información y aprueban la participación de su hijo (a), por favor firmar el presente consentimiento.

_____

Nombre Estudiante:
_____   _____
Firma padre   **Firma madre**
              SI   **NO**

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Appendix G

Consent Letter from school's principal

Bogotá, D.C. Mayo 12 - 2012

Colegio Bilingüe Buckingham

Directora: Marta Rincón Reina

Ciudad

Respetada señora:

Teniendo en cuenta el perfil internacional de la institución y la implementación de la diferenciación como estrategia pedagógica en el aula de clase, se pretende llevar a cabo un proyecto educativo llamado "Explorando el proceso de comprensión de lectura a través de la implementación de estrategias diferenciadas" dirigido a estudiantes de tercer grado, con el propósito de implementar estrategias de diferenciación que faciliten el proceso de lectura en la lengua extranjera.

Durante la implementación de este proyecto, los estudiantes desarrollarán algunas actividades y talleres guiados por el profesor. Igualmente, se grabarán y entrevistarán a los niños durante las clases. Cabe mencionar que la ejecución de este proyecto no entorpecerá ni atrasará la planeación de clases o actividades inherentes al currículo del área y tampoco tendrá incidencia alguna en las notas correspondientes al curso.

A los participantes se les garantiza estricta confidencialidad con la información que se obtenga y completa anonimidad.

Para que quede constancia que conocen esta información y la aprueban para ser desarrollan su institución solicito cordialmente firmar el presente consentimiento.

_____

Marta Rincón Reina-Directora

Appendix H

Research Project Timeline (Action Plan)

Activity/Date	Month (2011) August – September – October- November				Month (2012) March – April- May				Month (2012- II) September- October				Month (2012- II) November				Month (2013- I) March – April- May
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 1 – Week 2- Week 3- Week 4
Step 1: Initiation	▨	▨	▨	▨													
Step 2: Preliminary Investigation	▨	▨	▨	▨													
Step 3: Lit. review	▨	▨	▨	▨	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩
Step 4: Design of action plan – consent letter					▨	▨	▨	▨									
Step 5 : Design of instruments and piloting					▨	▨	▨	▨									
Step 6: design / Implementation					▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨			
Step 7: data collection									▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨			
Step 8: Analysis and of data									▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩
Step 9: Reflection & decision making									▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩
Step 10: Sharing findings									▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩	▩

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Appendix I

Timeline

DATE	STAGE	ACTIVITIES	SKILL	MATERIALES
		INITIATION		
SEP. 10 -11th	1. **Exploring the skill** 2. **Input**	**Reading "Ronal Morgan goes to Camp"** **Workshop to explain:** **1**. What is a main idea? **2**. Elements of a main idea.	✓ Reading comprehension	✓ Harcourt collections Book.
		CYCLE # 1		
SEPTEMBER 17- 21st	1. **Exploring the skill in terms of characters of a story.** 2. **Input (reading stages)** 3. **Creation of the tiered product.**	Reading "Rosie, a visiting dog" 1. Describing main characters (characters'web) 2. Identifying the main idea. 3. Selection of product by students	✓ Reading comprehension	✓ Harcourt collections Book. ✓ Different materials for the tiered products
		CYCLE # 2	✓	✓
SEPTEMBER 24- 28th	1. **Exploring the skill in terms of supporting details of the main idea.** 2. **Input (reading stages)** 3. **Creation of the tiered product.**	Reading "Turtle Bay" 1. Identifying the supporting details for main idea. 2. Identifying the main idea. 3. Selection of product by students	✓ Reading comprehension	✓ Harcourt collections Book. ✓ Different materials for the tiered products
		CYCLE # 3		
OCTOBER 1-5th	1. **Exploring the skill in terms of predictions** 2. **Input (reading stages)** 3. **Creation of the tiered product.**	Reading "Arthur writes a story" 1. Making predictions 2. Identifying the main idea. 3. Selection of product by students	✓ Reading comprehension	✓ Harcourt collections Book. ✓ Different materials for the tiered products
		CYCLE # 4		
OCTOBER 15-19th	1. **Exploring the skill in terms of identifying the main idea.** 2. **Input (reading stages)** 3. **Creation of the tiered product.**	Reading "My favorite video game" 1. Identifying the supporting details for main idea. 2. Identifying the main idea. 3. Selection of product by students	✓ Reading comprehension	✓ Online resource center "ReadingA-Z" ✓ Different materials for the tiered products
		CYCLE # 5		
OCTOBER 22-26th	1. **Exploring the skill in terms of summarizing the story** 2. **Input (reading stages)** 3. **Creation of the tiered product.**	Reading "Stories, Julian Tells" 1. Summarizing the story. (flow chart) 2. Identifying the main idea. 3. Selection of product by students	✓ Reading comprehension	✓ Harcourt collections Book. ✓ Different materials for the tiered products

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Appendix J

ICELT LESSON PLAN FORM

Main Aim.

Personal aims:

- **To keep students' focus on the activities managing appropriate timing and pace.**
- **To encourage STT through different activities**
- **To promote team work**
- **To foster learner autonomy by advising students to infer vocabulary from context or use dictionary.**

(please include at least one aim related to the development of autonomous learning environments**)**

Note: Aims are to be written as performance-based objectives, which go from covert to overt behaviours (See Wenning, 2008 at http://www.phy.ilstu.edu/pte/310content/objectives/stperfobjectives.html**)**

Assumed knowledge:
Write a description of the language/skills/competences that students already know/have that will serve as a basis for new language/skills input.

- **Students have a clear understanding of what a fiction story is**
- **Students are aware of the difference between fiction and non-fiction stories**
- **Students know the main elements of a story**

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Description of language item / skill(s)

Skill(s) and sub skill(s)

Reading

Identifying and representing main ideas from fiction stories

Materials :

- **Fiction story "My favorite video game" retrieved from** http://www.readinga-z.com/

- **Pieces of paper containing the story**

- **Slide containing the vocabulary**

- **Flow chart (appendix 10)**

EXPLORING THIRD GRADERS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH

Rationale

Anticipated problems	Planned solutions
1. Students might consider minor details from the text as main ideas	In the lead in, special emphasis will be given to the elements of a main.
2. Students might finish sooner than expected.	There will be extra activities for early finishers.

How do the anticipated problems and planned solutions relate to the above needs analysis?

As mentioned above, the emphasis of this lesson plan will be the identification of main ideas as a way to enhance students reading process.

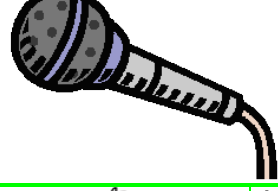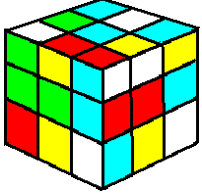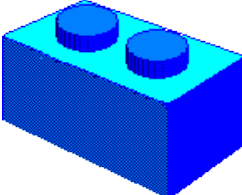| Stage	Aim	Procedure Teacher and student activity	Time and interaction
Exploration	To introduce the topic "video games" To engage learners to participate	Teacher will ask students to write the names of as many video games as they can in a piece of paper. Teacher will ask students: What do you know about videogames? Do you like them?	T- Ss 3 T-Ss 3
Pre- Reading	To active schemata	Teacher will display a slide containing some pictures of the vocabulary related to video games. (console- game pad, portable device, PSP) Teacher will ask: Do you know these objects? How do they work? Have you ever used them?	T-Ss 3´ T- Ss 3
While-reading	To present the reading text To read the fiction story	Teacher will hand out the story randomly divided in pieces of paper and students will organize in a coherent sequence. After organizing the stories, students will read it in groups.	T2 Ss 30
Post- reading activity # 1	To summarize the story To monitor comprehension	Students will answer some comprehension questions about the story. Students will use a flow chart to summarize the story.	Ss 30
Development of tiered product	To represent the main idea of the text	Student will choose a way to represent the main idea of the story. Then they will create their product to show understanding of the main idea.	Ss- Sss5 Ss 70
Wrap Up Consolidation	To consolidate main idea grasping	Volunteers will exhibit and explain their products	Ss 15´

Appendix K
Inventory test

FIND OUT YOUR PREFERRED LEARNING STYLE
Circle the letter that corresponds to the ONE option that is most like you.

NAME: _____   DATE:

_____

	I prefer lessons where we can discuss things.	I prefer lessons where there is something to look at (like a picture, chart, diagram or video) or something to draw.	I prefer lessons where we can do something practical – or at least move around.
	A	V	K
	I often fiddle with things in class (a pen, paper clip or rubber band.)	I often sing or hum to myself in class.	I often doodle in class.
	K	A	V
	When learning a new skill, I prefer to just get on with it.	When learning a new skill, I prefer someone to explain to me how to do it.	When learning a new skill, I prefer to watch someone else show me how to do it.
	K	A	V
	When the adverts come on the telly – I like to watch them.	When the adverts come on the telly – I get up and do something.	When the adverts come on the telly – I like to sing along with them.
	V	K	A
	I would prefer to listen to a story.	I would prefer to see a comic strip of a story.	I would prefer to act out a story.
	A	V	K
	I am good at learning physical skills.	I have a good memory for people's names.	I have a good memory for faces.
	K	A	V
	I prefer teachers who use diagrams to show us things.	I prefer teachers who get us to do something.	I prefer teachers who explain things to us.

	V	K	A
	If I get in trouble in class, it's for talking.	If I get in trouble in class, it's for drawing on the desk or all over my books.	If I get in trouble in class it's for fidgeting.
	A	V	K
	On a long journey I like to look at the scenery or read a book.	On a long journey I can't wait until we stop so I can walk around.	On a long journey I like to listen to music or talk to the other travellers.
	V	K	A
	I use my hands a lot when I am talking.	When I am discussing something, I sometimes use words my friends don't know.	When I am discussing something, I like to doodle.
	K	A	V
	If I could be famous, I would be a sports-person (or dancer).	If I could be famous, I would be a film-star.	If I could be famous, I would be a singer.
	K	V	A
	I would rather go outside and play.	I would rather watch my favorite TV program.	I would rather listen to my favorite music.
	K	V	A
	I get distracted in class if I can see something outside the window.	I get distracted in class if I can hear something happening outside.	I lose concentration if I have to sit still for a long time.
	V	A	K
	I am good at drawing.	I am good at making things.	I am a good listener.
	V	K	A
	Out of these 3 jobs - I would prefer to be a radio DJ (or presenter).	Out of these 3 jobs - I would prefer to be a mechanic.	Out of these 3 jobs - I would prefer to be an artist (or designer).

|	A	K	V
	In my spare time I would prefer to do something physical, such as sport or dancing.	In my spare time I would prefer to watch TV or a video.	In my spare time I would prefer to listen to music or chat with friends.
	K	V	A
	The type of puzzle I would prefer is "Spot the difference".	The type of puzzle I would prefer is "Name that tune".	The type of puzzle I would prefer is "Rubik's cube".
	V	A	K
	If I needed to build a Lego model, I would get someone to explain how or to read the instructions to me.	If I needed to build a Lego model, I would try to work out which bits fit together.	If I needed to build a Lego model, I would follow the diagram or the picture on the packet.
	A	K	V

Retrieved and adapted from http://www.brainboxx.co.uk/a3_aspects/pages/vak_quest.htm

When you have circled one option in each row, count up how many A's, K's and V's you scored.

If you scored mainly V's, you are a VISUAL learner.
If you scored mainly A's buttons, you are an AUDITORY learner.
If you scored mainly K's buttons, you are a KINESTHETIC learner.

Appendix L

READING TEXT SAMPLE

PEPITA TALKS TWICE
BY OFELIA DUMAS LACHTMAN
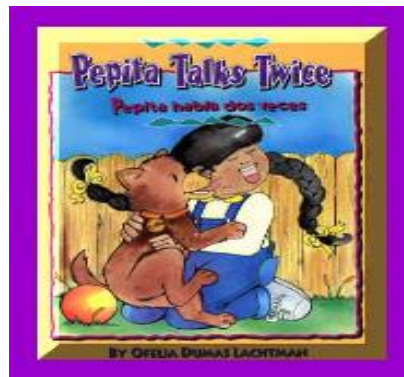
Pepita was a little girl who spoke Spanish and English.

"Come, Pepita, please help us," people would say. Everybody called on Pepita to talk for them in Spanish and English. And she did what they asked without a grumble. Until today.

Today she didn't want to help anyone. She wanted to get home before her brother Juan [HWAN]. She wanted to teach their dog, Lobo a new trick. She wanted to teach him to fetch a ball. But if she didn't hurry, Juan would teach Lobo first.

Pepita raced by the grocery store that belonged to Mr. Hobbs, but not fast enough. "Pepita," Mr. Hobbs called. "Come speak to this lady in Spanish. Tell me what she wants!"

Pepita did what Mr. Hobbs asked. But deep inside of her a grumble began.

She tiptoed by the house where her Aunt Rosa lived, but not softly enough. "Pepita," her

aunt called in Spanish. "Come talk to the delivery man in English. Tell me what he wants!"

Pepita did what Aunt Rosa asked. But deep inside of her the grumble grew.

She ducked behind the fence as she went by her neighbors' house, but not low enough.

"Pepita," Miguel called and said in Spanish, "My mother wants you to talk on the telephone in English. Please tell her what the man wants."

Pepita did what Miguel asked. But deep inside of her the grumble grew larger.

And when she went into her own yard and found her brother Juan teaching Lobo to return a ball, the grumble grew so big that it exploded.

"If I didn't speak Spanish and English," she burst out, "I would have been here first!"

That night as Pepita lay in bed, she thought and thought. By morning she had decided what she would do. She slipped out of bed and tiptoed by Lobo, who was sleeping on the floor. She hurried into the kitchen, where her mother was cooking breakfast and Juan was eating.

"I am never, ever going to speak Spanish anymore," Pepita said loudly. "That's pretty dumb," Juan said. "My, oh my, Pepita. Why?" her mother asked.

"Because I'm tired of talking twice."
"Twice?" her mother asked.
"Yes! Once in Spanish and once in English. So I'm never going to speak Spanish anymore."

Appendix M

Master List

MASTER LIST

1. Tiered product to represent main idea

2. Understanding of stories

3. Understanding of main idea

4. Tiered products to identify important elements of a story

5. Practice of reading skills

6. Creativity

7. Affective reactions towards tiered products

8. Reflection on the stories (themes)

9. Connections with life

10. Vocabulary

11. Main idea completion

12. Students likes and dislikes

13. Concept of main idea

Appendix N

Matrix

CODES	DESCRIPTION	S# 2	S# 4	S# 5	S# 6	S# 7	S# 8	S# 9	S# 10	S# 11	S# 13
A	Students expressed why they chose to do a particular tiered product	x		x		x	x	x	x		
B	Students stated what they have learned when making the products.	x	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	
C	Students expressed how they felt while making the products. Example: Happy, Motivated Creative	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
D	Students established connections between what they read and their real lives.	x								x	
E	This refers to what students were able to do during the tiered product development Example: Understanding main idea, reflecting on the theme of the story	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	

FREQUENCY OF DATA
THE MOST RECURRENT CODES WERE: MAIN IDEA UNDERSTANDING
PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF TIERED PRODUCTS
READING PERFORMANCES

Appendix O

Tiered Product (Radio Show)

Appendix P

Tiered Product (Graphic Organizer)