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Facultad de Lenguas

Junior High School Students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading comprehension

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LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS MODERNAS

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and attitudes towards reading comprehension**

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Abstract

Over the last decades, research and interest have increased regarding beliefs affecting students' language learning processes. This is due to the fact that beliefs determine the behaviour on an individual and, as a consequence, the development of negative or positive attitudes towards reading comprehension. Since reading is a necessary activity in the foreign language classroom which involves motivation and positive attitudes, the purpose of the present paper was to investigate students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading comprehension.

This study was carried out in a public junior high school in the City of Puebla, Mexico. The research data was collected through a questionnaire administered to 24 students on an average age of 13 years old. Findings revealed that 57.1 per cent of the students do not like reading. Some of the main reasons why students dislike reading were unknown vocabulary, pronunciation and nervousness. In contrast, 62.5 per cent related the word "enjoyable" to reading; likewise, 21.9 per cent expressed that they would be more encouraged in reading, if readings were interesting.

As it can be appreciated, beliefs play an essential role when developing positive or negative attitudes. Therefore, developing positive attitudes and beliefs in students through the use of conscious-raising tasks would be a helpful way to increase students' motivation because students will be able to reflect on their knowledge, habits, skills and motivation to perform a specific task. In conclusion, only by leading students towards a reflective path, will they become aware of the importance of the reading comprehension process, as well as their beliefs and attitudes towards it.

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At last but not least, I would like to thank the students who participated in the development of this paper. Their contribution to this research was essential and quite valuable for my purposes.

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Dedications

This research paper is dedicated to one of the most important persons in my life: my mom. Her pieces of advice, her love and patience were, are and will always be the strength I need to deal with my everyday achievements and failures. Thank you so much mom for being the great person you are...

Auch ein langer Weg beginnt mit dem ersten Schritt...

(Even long paths start with the first step...)

Anonymous

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Chapter introduction

Communication is an essential characteristic of human beings. We are always in constant contact with our surrounding world to express our feelings, ideas, points of view, necessities, and perceptions among other aspects. Communication played, and it is still playing an important role in the development of social interaction which turned from oral into written language. Communication is therefore, “The main and most important mean of transmitting information about our day-to-day transaction, knowledge, traditions, culture, and learning; it is also the main vehicle of thought” (Milouse & Lev Soudek, 1985, p. 110).

Written language can be found everywhere. By means of newspapers, magazines, books, web pages, brochures, and so on, we are always surrounded by written information. Depending on our interests and purposes we decide to read carefully, to scan or to skim a given text. Consequently, we develop specific strategies that help us to deal with written communication and get specific information.

However, when learning a foreign language we face different obstacles such as unknown vocabulary, genre, and length of the text that prevent us from getting the meaning of the written language across. Thus, we fail to get the information we seek. Reading comprehension in any language is a process demanding skills and strategies (Blachowicz and Ogle 2008, in Mohammadi & Mojtaba, 2015). Reading strategies are “ways of getting around difficulties encountered while reading” (Urquhart and Weir, 1998, p. 95 in Talebi, 1995, p. 47). Those strategies are supposed to be taught in the very early stages of education. Nevertheless, some students are unaware of what the reading comprehension process implies as well as how and when to use certain reading strategies or techniques. In

addition, some of them think of reading as an irrelevant and boring activity. Thus, they pay little or no attention to the teachers' input material and as a consequence their performance when reading is relatively poor.

On the contrary, effective readers are generally motivated, have positive attitudes and are willing to interact with the text in and outside the classroom. "Attitude toward language learning plays a crucial role in language learning as it influences learners' success or failure" (Zainol Abidin, et al., 2012 & Finch, 2008 in Soleimani & Hanafi, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, "students perceptions of dimensions of their classroom social environment, including affiliation, cohesion, fairness, mutual respect, and support from teachers and students are associated consistently with adaptive motivational beliefs and achievement behaviors" (Patrick, Knee, Canevello, & Lonsbary, 2007 in Seitz, 2010, p. 32). Regarding those aspects, it can be assumed that students' beliefs and attitudes play an important role in the reading comprehension process. For this reason, the researcher decided to investigate junior high school students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading.

1.1 Justification

This research was focused on students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading under a junior high school panorama since most of the time those aspects affect considerably their reading performance. Moreover, reading in a foreign language is one of the most difficult tasks a language learner faces. Besides, some students usually think of reading as an obligation, and as a consequence, they express negative attitudes and are unwilling to read whatever the teacher provides. They read without paying attention to the value of the material and information they can get from a reading as well as all the benefits reading

offers. Furthermore, they tend not to be conscious about the reading comprehension process that occurs when they work with different types of written language.

1.2 Study significance

The results of this study can provide basis for designing effective classes focused on raising awareness in the reading comprehension process through activities that can develop positive attitudes in students. Since many junior high school students are not at all interested in reading in the foreign language classroom, it is helpful to know that keeping them working in a series of tasks can change the perception they have of reading. Furthermore, it is necessary to provide students with material they are interested in as well as motivate them through different activities. As a consequence, they will develop positive attitudes towards reading and hopefully their performance when reading will improve.

1.3 Research background

Reading in the classroom can be a complex task. Therefore, there are teachers who skip or just do not pay so much attention to it. In addition, Mexico is not a country where readers are everywhere; therefore, students can hardly have reading strategies and techniques to read in their mother tongue, and what is more, if they do not like reading in their mother tongue, they will obviously not like reading in a foreign language. In general, there are students who express negative attitudes towards reading. Those attitudes can be perfectly appreciated in some junior high school students who are indifferent to any kind of reading material unless such material catches their attention.

Reading is not only an important and necessary aspect in the classroom but in our everyday life. There is lots of information to read everywhere. However, reading depends

on our interest towards certain topics. If we do not care about politics, for example, then we will not read anything about politics. Besides, there are occasions in which the teacher cannot please every student and have attractive material for everybody. Therefore, to catch students' attention it is necessary to keep them busy working from time to time in pairs, teams or groups in order to perform tasks or activities where they not only develop or learn grammar aspects but also enjoy the activity and change their misconceptions about reading. Hopefully, they will become aware of the importance of the reading comprehension process and will develop positive attitudes towards reading.

1.4 Research location

This research started as a project in a Faculty of Modern Languages belonging to a Mexican public university. There, students are asked to do research and write a thesis in order to graduate and get a major degree. Once the thesis topic was established, the research location focused specifically on students attending a public junior high school situated in the City of Puebla.

1.5 Study aims

The main aim of this research is to identify junior high school students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading. To carry out such aim a questionnaire was given to the learners of a public junior high school who were participants in an English language program. After that, the data analysis was done. Subsequently, the findings were illustrated into figures along with a detailed description.

1.6 Research questions

There were two questions that conducted this research:

RQ1 What are students' beliefs about reading in English?

RQ2 What are students' attitudes about reading in English?

1.7 Key terms

The following terms are essential for a better comprehension of the theoretical framework.

Awareness: Having knowledge of something. *Aware* implies vigilance in observing or alertness in drawing inferences from what one experiences (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1998, p. 181).

Belief: (I) The mental act, condition, or habit of placing trust or confidence in another. (II) Mental acceptance and conviction in the truth, actuality, or validity of something. (III) Something believed or accepted as true (The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, 2000, p. 164).

Language attitudes: The attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. Language attitudes may have an effect on second language or foreign language learning (Richards, Platt & Platt 2002, p. 199).

Motivation: The factors that determine a person's desire to do something. In second language and foreign language teaching, learning may be affected differently by different types of motivation. Two types of motivation are sometimes distinguished:

- a) **Instrumental motivation:** wanting to learn a language because it will be useful for certain "instrumental" goals, such as getting a job, reading a foreign newspaper, passing an examination.
- b) **Integrative motivation:** wanting to learn a language in order to communicate with people of another culture who speak it (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; in Richards, Platt & Platt 2002, p. 238).

Reflection: A thought, idea, or opinion formed or a remark made as a result of meditation (Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 1998, p. 982).

Strategy: Procedure used in learning, thinking, etc. which serve as a way of reaching a goal. In language learning, learning strategies are those conscious or unconscious processes which language learners make use of in learning and using language (Richards, Platt & Platt 2002, p. 355).

Learning strategy: (In language learning) A way in which a learner attempts to work out the meanings and uses of a word, grammatical rules, and other aspects of a language [...]. (In second language learning) Intentional behaviour and thoughts that learners make use of during learning in order to better help them understand, learn or remember new information. These may include focusing on certain aspects of new information, analysing, and organizing information during learning to increase comprehension, evaluating learning when it is completed to see if further action is needed (ibid).

Technique: The systematic procedure by which a complex or scientific task is accomplished (The American Heritage Dictionary of English Language, 2000, p. 1776).

1.8 Chapter summary and overview of thesis document

To sum up, this research is focused on students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading in students of English as a foreign language in a Mexican public junior high school. The reason why this topic was researched is based on the fact that reading plays a vital role when learning a foreign language. Besides, the more positive the attitude of students towards reading is, the more effective their reading comprehension process will be. In order to answer the research questions a survey research was done. Therefore a questionnaire was designed and the information gathered was put into figures.

The following chapter presents the literature review and the theoretical framework of the study. That chapter is followed by the methodology, the results, the conclusions and the appendix.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Chapter introduction

How can somebody be able to learn a different language from their mother tongue? And what about those people who can speak more than three languages? How does a bilingual individual learn to switch from one language to another one so easily? What kind of cognitive processes occur when reading in a foreign language? Questions like these emerge day after day not only among specialists who are involved in linguistics, but also among ordinary people who are interested in learning a second or foreign language.

“Language is primarily acquired incidentally, through listening, talking, and reading” (Learning words in a second language, n.d.). When learning a foreign language, learners develop different skills that help them understand and reproduce the new language successfully. Traditionally, those skills have been classified into four areas: reading, writing speaking, and listening. Throughout time, diverse methods and approaches have been developed and used to work on such skills. However, there is not yet, a specific method or approach that guarantees one hundred per cent the development of those four language skills. Furthermore, every student is different and as a result, the way they learn and develop such skills differs significantly from one individual to another.

So, what should teachers do to help students develop those language skills uniformly? And what if students are not interested or get bored with the material the teacher provides? First of all, it should be understood that not all students will learn identically, especially teenagers. While some are paying attention to the class the first ten minutes, others are talking or sending text messages, talking to the classmate next to them

or making fun of somebody or something. What is more, students are not always very enthusiastic when talking about reading.

Reading is an essential part of language learning. Nevertheless, it is seen by some students as an obligation and sometimes as something useless they must do at school. They think reading is boring and they find the material unattractive. If they are asked to read individually, they pretend they are reading, but they are not. If they are asked to read out loud, they just produce the sounds and do not get any input from what they read. They also get distracted very easily; thus, they are not able to finish what they are asked to read or they do not complete the activities set for the reading in form and time. It is also worthy to mention that achievements and failures play an important role in students' behaviour. As Seitz argues (2010), "recurring failures to succeed and self-concept issues often complicate a student's ability to learn any of a variety of reading skills" (p. 31). As a consequence, students often develop negative attitudes towards reading.

Besides, some students are not aware of what the reading process implies or what kinds of strategies are available to deal with written language. They are not able to discern that reading is an active process needed in every aspect of our daily life and that there are different ways to get the information we need without having to read complete books, or articles. The ability of the teacher to immediately think of diverse ideas or tasks to make students interact in different ways with their classmates as well as to use reading in an appropriate way plays also an important role since the conditions in which certain texts are presented to students affect considerably the manner in which students perceive reading. What is more, "the reaction and attitude toward a task can also be determined by the degree of the participants' motivation (Oxford & Shearin, 1994 in Hosseini, 2013, p.64). In

addition, “current research suggests that motivated readers hold positive beliefs about themselves as readers” (Guthrie & Wigfield, 1997, in Seitz, 2010, p.31).

The next section discusses the reasons why people read. After that, an overview to the reading comprehension process is described as well as the most important reading strategies and techniques. Next, the importance of having a positive attitude towards reading is discussed. This is followed by a review of the literature on how positive attitudes towards reading can be done and promoted. Later on, there is a section on raising reading comprehension awareness. Finally, the conclusion of the chapter two will be presented.

2.1 Why do we read?

Reading is a natural human activity. It is a vital component of language which “has a pivotal role in helping human to express his opinions” (Zainol Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, & Alzwari, 2012 in Soleimani & Hanafi, 2013, p. 1). Once we learn to read, we automatically read whatever is around us. Even though we do not articulate oral words when we read, we also communicate. All the information we get from written language is somehow communicating something and has, of course, different intentions. Maybe the author attempts to persuade us about certain things, maybe she wants to express her point of view about certain issues, or it might be that she is trying to sell something. As it can be appreciated, there are several reasons why written language is done, and there are also several reasons for why we read. For instance, for entertainment, to keep ourselves informed about social issues, to expand our knowledge about certain areas, as a leisure activity, as a requirement at school, and so on.

Depending on our interests we will be willing to read a given text or we will decide to read a different sort of thing. The complexity of the text has a lot to do as well. If we find the information too difficult, then we will not finish reading it. On the contrary, if the text is easy to read, and we are interested in the topic that it presents, then we will pay special attention to that new information. Therefore, reading is both, a conscious and an unconscious process in which the reader applies different types of strategies or techniques to discover the meaning that the author intended (Mikulecky, 2008).

Reading is also a cognitive process where certain abilities are developed. Those abilities are called reading skills and they help us to get the meaning across. “For fluent readers, most of the reading skills are employed unconsciously and automatically. When confronted with a challenging text, fluent readers apply these skills consciously and strategically in order to comprehend” (ibid, p. 3)

To sum up, reading is a cognitive and natural activity that we automatically perform since our brain decodes immediately the words standing in any kind of advertisement or means of information we are surrounded by. The reasons for what we read vary according to our purposes and interests, though. Thus, we will decide how we read a text and how many times we will read it in order to get the information we look for. Reading is an activity present in different aspects of our lives and plays a very essential role when learning a foreign or second language.

2.1.1 Reading comprehension process

So far we have discussed the different reasons why we read. But, what exactly happens when we read? As Silberstein (1994) states, reading is an active process where students interact with the text to create a meaningful discourse. In other words, reading is

not a passive but an active process where students, according to their language level, conscious or unconsciously perform different mental constructions such as decoding, interpreting, inferring, analysing, and evaluating, among other processes. Those mental constructions are called metacognition. “The term metacognition includes two broad categories of mental activities: self-appraised knowledge about cognition and self-management of one's thinking” (Cross & Paris, 1988, p. 131).

On the one hand, “self-appraisals of one's knowledge, abilities, and thinking skills are often charged with affect and motivation” (ibid), which is a fundamental component in the learning process as well as the development of positive attitudes. On the other hand, the self-managed component of metacognition involves different types of skills. Paris and Lindauer (1982 in Cross and Paris 1988) claim that self-management can be categorized into the three following terms: evaluation, planning, and regulation. In reading, “evaluation refers to analyses of task characteristics and personal abilities that affect comprehension. Planning involves the selection of particular strategies to reach the goals that have been set or chosen. Regulation is the monitoring and redirection of one's activities during the course of reading to reach the desired goals” (Cross and Paris, 1988, p. 53).

Therefore, reading means not only receiving information but interacting with it to get a meaningful input from what we read. Grabe and Stoller (2002, in Ueta, 2005, p. 11) claim that reading for comprehension is the most basic purpose of reading though it is actually more complex since it “requires rapid and automatic processing of words, strong skills in informing a general meaning representation of main ideas, and efficient coordination of many processes under very limited time constraints”.

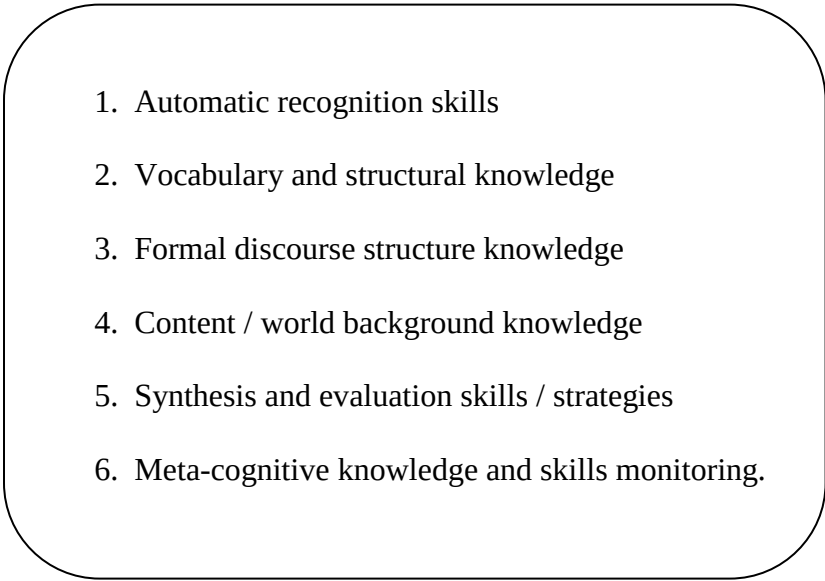
Cross and Paris (1988, p. 131) mention that “reading is a purposeful activity requiring the orchestration of a wide variety of cognitive skills to decode, comprehend, and

learn from text”. Reading, as it has been mentioned before, is an active and multidimensional process “in which readers make inferences and bring prior knowledge to the reading task” (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Resnick, 1981 in Cross & Paris, 1988, p. 131).

Similarly, comprehension refers to “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Dougherty Stahl, 2003, p. 17; Bernhardt, 2011, p. 7; Marshall, 2006, p.14, Snow, 2002 in Mohammadi, & Mojtaba, 2015, p. 53). Regarding this definition, comprehension has been classified into three levels according to Snow (2012 in Mohammadi, & Mojtaba, 2015): The reader, the text, and the activity. “The *reader* refers to all the capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experiences that a person brings to the act of reading. *Text* refers to any printed text or electronic text that is to be comprehended. And activity refers to the purposes, processes, and consequences associated with the act of reading. Then *meaning* is constructed as an interaction among these three elements, within a larger sociocultural context” (Snow, 2012 in Mohammadi, & Mojtaba, 2015, p. 53).

“Successful reading comprehension can be categorized into two domains: inside-out components (phonemic awareness, phonics, and reading fluency) and outside-in components (comprehending text once it has been decoded) (Coyne et al., 2009 in Donat, 2006 in Abbott, Dornbush, Giddings & Thomas, 2012, p. 55)”. Moreover, different authors have established various kinds of taxonomies related to reading comprehension. However, we will just have a look at the taxonomy proposed by Grabe (1991 in Ueta, 2005, p. 6).

Figure 2.1: *Grabe's reading taxonomy*

- 
1. Automatic recognition skills
 2. Vocabulary and structural knowledge
 3. Formal discourse structure knowledge
 4. Content / world background knowledge
 5. Synthesis and evaluation skills / strategies
 6. Meta-cognitive knowledge and skills monitoring.

According to the web page of the Cuesta College (*Reading comprehension*, 2015), effective readers comprehend what the reading comprehension process involves and are able to control it. Such consciousness and ability to control the reading process is called metacognition, which refers to capacity of “recognizing which kinds of learning tasks cause difficulty, which approaches to remembering information work better than others and how to solve different kinds of problems” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 2002, p. 227).

Furthermore, in the *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, different types of reading comprehension can be found. Those are classified according to the reader's purposes (ibid). Those are:

- a) **Literal comprehension:** reading in order to understand, remember, or recall the information explicitly contained in a passage.
- b) **Inferential comprehension:** reading in order to find information which is not explicitly stated in a passage, using the reader's experience and intuition, and by inferring.

c) **Critical or evaluative comprehension:** reading in order to compare information in a passage with the reader's own knowledge and values.

d) **Appreciative comprehension:** reading in order to gain an emotional or other kind of valued response from a passage.

As a conclusion, it can be said that reading involves different types of cognitive and meta-cognitive processes. Good readers are aware of such processes and are able to assimilate and manipulate them in order to deal with new or unknown information.

2.1.2 Reading strategies

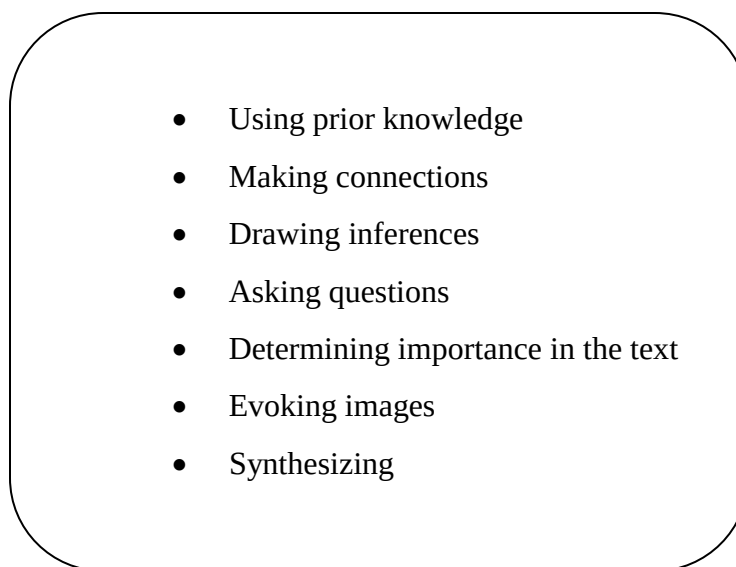
As it has already been mentioned, when we read we make use of different resources to get the meaning of written language across. For instance, decoding, interpreting, inferring, analysing, and evaluating, and so on. Those mental processes are called strategies. According to Kendall and Khuon (2005, p. 5 in Bolos 2012, p. 16), comprehension strategies include “making connections, asking questions, visualizing, inferring, determining importance, and synthesizing”.

Furthermore,

comprehension strategies are essential for promoting reading achievement. Instructional strategies such as concept wheels, semantic word maps, definitions, webbing, semantic feature analyses, and teaching relationships among words are valuable tools that support the active processing of new vocabulary in reading (Rupley & Nichols, 2005 in Abbott, Dornbush, Giddings, & Thomas, 2012, p. 55).

Taking into account the strategies mentioned so far as well as the strategies mentioned by Weaver (2002), we have the following figure:

Figure 2.2: *Reading strategies*



All those strategies are part of techniques used in the reading comprehension process and they will be explained in the next section.

2.1.3 Reading techniques

As we already know, the type of reading we decide to do depends directly on our purposes. For example, if we are just looking for dates in a text, we will search for numbers; or if we are looking for phrases, then we will go through the text and search for phrases which may be written in bold or italic. Those actions are called *reading techniques*. A technique is “the way of using basic skills [...], method or manner of accomplishing something” (*Webster’s New World Dictionary*, 1984, p. 1460). In reading there are widely used techniques. For instance:

- **Bottom-up processing** or **data-driven processing**: Process in which readers recognize and analyse written language components such as words, sentences, or chunks of language, and understand what a text means line by line (Ueta, 2005).
- **Top-down** or **conceptually-driven processing**: Process in which readers “make use of their previous knowledge, expectations, experiences, scripts, and schemes, in reading texts” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 2002, p. 384).
- **Interactive reading**: It results from the combination of bottom up and the top down strategies. The purposes of reading will define to what extent bottom-up or top-down processing is used.
- **Skimming**: Process in which readers run their eyes across a whole text to get a general idea (Ueta, 2005).
- **Scanning**: Process used when the “reader wants to locate a particular piece of information without necessarily understanding the rest of a text or passage” (Richards, Platt & Platt, 2002, p. 322).

So far we have talked about the reading comprehension process and the actions brought about when we read. The following section will discuss why it is important to raise awareness towards reading as well as how to do it.

2.2 Why is it important to develop positive beliefs and attitude towards reading in our students?

Reading is an amazing activity that everybody should do and enjoy. Reading offers a wide variety of benefits for an individual. When we read, we learn new vocabulary, we develop writing skills, our thinking becomes critical, and there are so many other benefits

than can be mentioned. In spite of all the positive effects reading promotes in a person, not everybody is fond of doing such activity. This is due to the fact that students develop certain beliefs and attitudes through their learning experiences which affect either positive or negatively their learning process. As Woods (1996, p. 186) states:

Students' beliefs about language play an important role in language course, where language is both the means by which the subject matter is taught [...] and the subject matter itself. People unconsciously internalize beliefs about language throughout their lives, and so the beliefs about what language is, what 'proper' language is, and so on, vary from individual to individual and are often deeply held.

Beliefs, according to Ford (1994 in Borg, p. 36), "are convictions or opinions that are formed either by experience or by the intervention of ideas through the learning process". In other words, people beliefs about certain issues will eventually have an effect on the way they behave and interact with the world around them. Thus, beliefs are the reason why students develop either positive or negative attitudes towards reading.

Linde (1980 in Borg, 1996) developed the notion of **belief systems**. She states that a belief system is a "set of beliefs which is coherent, which is focused around some central issue, and which is not held by everyone in a given culture" (1980a:13 in Borg, 1996, p. 69). In other words, beliefs about certain issue have been established according to the ideology of a given culture; nevertheless, those beliefs may vary from person to person as well as from culture to culture. According to Borg, (1996, p. 70), "a belief system deals not only with beliefs about the way things are, but also with the way things should be". As a consequence, individuals' behaviour and attitude are influenced either negative or positive by those beliefs which internalize throughout time in a person's mind and way of life.

Thus, in order to develop positive beliefs and attitudes towards reading in our students, it is essential to know what they think of reading.

Unfortunately, some students believe that reading is a useless, boring, uninteresting activity. Most of the time they think of reading as an obligation; therefore, they do not read, and if they do, they read just for the sake of reading without knowing how to read or how to manipulate a text. Such a panorama can be found mostly in students who have to read whether they like it or not. More specifically, some junior high school students frequently encounter problems related to reading at school. This happens because they do not like reading at all in Spanish nor in English. Besides, they do not know how to read. Brown (2000 in Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013), states that second language learners who possess positive attitudes develop better than those with negative attitudes due to the fact that the former ones are motivated and willing to learn.

Moreover, Mikulecky (2008) states that:

Effective reading is essential for success in acquiring a second language. After all, reading is the basis of instruction in all aspects of language learning: using textbooks for language courses, writing, revising, developing vocabulary, acquiring grammar, editing, and using computer-assisted language learning programs. Reading instruction, therefore, is an essential component of every second-language curriculum. Understanding some important facts about reading, literacy, and teaching methods is essential for providing effective instruction in reading (Mikulecky, 2008, p. 1).

To sum up, reading plays an essential role not only in a person's daily life, but also in the development of her educational and professional environment. Furthermore, it is less difficult to learn a foreign or second language if we have a positive attitude. This is why it is necessary to know students' beliefs towards reading so that we can develop a plan to

generate or increase in them positive beliefs and attitudes. The next sections will discuss some strategies we can do to help students to become aware of the importance of reading as well as to develop positive beliefs and attitudes towards it.

2.2.1 How can we generate positive beliefs and attitudes towards reading in our students?

It is of crucial importance to stimulate our students when learning a new language. Stimulation in language learning can be called: **motivation**. If students are motivated, it means that they have positive attitudes towards learning, and as a consequence, they will not give up when facing difficulties through their learning.

As it has been mentioned, some students find it difficult to get the meaning of a text across; thus, they fail when reading. Other students think of reading as a dull activity while some others find the texts very difficult. As a consequence, they express negative attitudes towards reading and learning in general. There are some other factors that influence students' motivation such as classroom environment, complexity of tasks, relationship among students and teacher, learning styles, or students' beliefs.

Pajares (1992 in Borg, p. 26) argues that “beliefs are formed and tend to self-perpetuate even against contradictions caused by the reason, time, schooling or experience”. That is why a safe and inclusive classroom environment should be promoted in the classroom. If the classroom is a supportive place where everyone is treated equal, respected, valued and included, students will participate more actively their beliefs will change and as a result, they will develop positive attitudes.

Likewise, another key aspect is that students' beliefs and attitudes depend as well on their success or failure in the classroom. Therefore, when performing certain tasks where

students are able to achieve their goals, there is a great probability of improving their attitudes since they will feel confident. On the contrary, if students find the tasks too difficult, they will become reluctant and will not complete them. Besides, they will develop negative attitudes and their performance in learning will be poor. Berliner (1981, in Worthy 1996, in Seitz 2010, p. 31) “found that rates of success were clearly linked to greater learning and improved student attitudes, while tasks where students were moderately successful were less consistently related to learning and hard tasks had a negative impact on learning. Hard tasks also produced off-task behaviours and negative attitudes”.

Another important factor is the relationship among students and teacher. In the researcher’s opinion, students and teacher should get to know each other in such a way that students know what is expected from them to do and vice versa. Moreover, the teacher should try to motivate students as much as she can. By means of attractive tasks, films, games or just encouraging phrases. Likewise, as Worthy (1996, in Seitz, 2010, p. 31) states, “students should participate in regular classroom experiences appropriate to their cognitive and maturational levels”.

It is also of great importance to help students realize how they can use what they learn in the real world. In the same way, teachers should discover what topics their students want to learn about and what activities they enjoy doing. With that in mind, a curriculum could be designed including attractive material and interesting activities out of the traditional instruction since students will be more motivated to learn about topics that are of relevance, importance or interest to them (Brophy, 1986; in Seitz 2010).

2.2.2 How can reading comprehension awareness be raised?

Awareness according to the *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* (1984), "implies having knowledge of something through alertness in observing or interpreting what one sees, hears, feels" (p. 97). More explicitly, the world awareness refers to the capacity of recognizing the importance of a fact, situation, or action in different aspects of our daily lives.

Therefore, raising reading comprehension awareness means waking up students consciousness towards reading. That means helping students understand how to accomplish a certain activity, what strategies or techniques they can use, when to use them, and why to use them. It is also vital to help them realize that they are the principal motor of their own learning process; thus, they should learn to auto-assess themselves and be able to admit what aspects of their learning process they need to improve.

Reading comprehension awareness can be raised through a very simple process in our minds: reflection. Reflection "is a way of thinking about learning and helping individual learners to understand what, how and why they learn. It is about developing the capacity to make judgments and evaluating where learning might take you" (Hinett, n. d., p. 1). In other words, reflection means understanding our learning process and the quality of it by thinking critically about our positive and negative experiences as students, by reflecting on what we have done to be in the place where we are, what we have done right or wrong, and what we can do to enhance our learning.

Reflection then, is the starting point to take control of our own learning process. It "helps raise our awareness of ourselves as learners and to see that we can direct and change our learning" (ibid). Reflection can lead us to different paths. First of all, it gives us the chance to meet us again. That is to say, it may help us discover who we are, what we want to

achieve, and why we are learning. Secondly, it can lead us to change the way we learn. It means that we may want to look for better learning strategies or techniques, as well as to reorganize activities or change our behaviour so that we can focus on learning. And last but not least, reflection may help us learn from our own mistakes.

As Hinett (n. d.) states, “learners construct their own meaning about situations drawing on both their cognitive skills (reasoning, knowledge) and metacognitive skills (intuition, self-awareness)” (p. 2). As a result, when students encounter a new situation, they immediately try to make connections with their prior knowledge to respond to this new experience. Such connections are the result of reflection which can be carried out in action, that is to say, at the moment; on action, it means some time later the situation was faced; and for action, which means they not only reflect on what they experienced but on what they will do to solve whatever problem that could have emerged.

The process of reflection will help us then to raise awareness among students so that they can develop positive beliefs and attitudes towards reading. Most students have no idea of what they do to complete a reading task. So, what should be done to raise student’s awareness towards reading is make them reflect on what they do when they read, why they do some things rather than others, and what they could do to have a better performance when reading.

Later on, they can be taught different ways to deal with written language by explaining to them strategies and reading techniques as well as helping them to become reflective learners who may in the future become independent students. It is important to mention that reflection leads to independent learning, such as Knight claims, “independence is a goal, not a starting point (Knight 1996, in Tait & Knight 1996, p.35)”. Reflection and independent learning are terms that are strictly related to one another. Thus,

the promotion of independent learning requires the teacher to become a reflective person as well, a person whose teaching practice is not traditional but student-centred where students are actively involved in their learning process. The purpose of reflection is, therefore, to help students to examine the processes they perform when they work with a text. Through reflection students will become aware of what they do when reading and they will also find an explanation for what happens in terms of what, why and how they can complete a task.

Some ways to raise awareness among students are the use of journals, audio and video recording as well as self-peer assessment. They are quite effective and they are also used in other areas such as reflective teaching. Prompt questions like “How did I find the answer?” “What can I do next time to get a better solution?” can also be helpful.

2.5 Conclusion

To sum up, students’ beliefs and attitudes play an important role when learning a foreign or second language because it influences students’ performance when reading. Therefore, the more positive the attitude of a students is, the more effective she will perform when reading.

There are several factors that influence students’ beliefs and attitudes such as classroom environment or tasks difficulty. That is why the teacher should create a friendly classroom environment where students feel free to experiment with the language rather than being afraid of making mistakes.

Some other important aspects in the development of positive attitudes are motivation and awareness towards reading. If students are highly motivated, their performance when reading will be reflected in good results. Furthermore, if they are aware

of what reading is and what they do to achieve what they want when reading, they will definitely become effective readers.

Reflection may be also an essential factor for developing positive attitudes since it is good for students to know and reflect about what they can do with what they have learned. Reflection can be thought of as the cornerstone of independent learning. Those two terms are intimately linked to each other, and both constitute the basis of the new teaching tendency which is mainly student-centred. If students are taught or induced to reflect, they will comprehend the importance of different academic aspects, in this case, they will understand why it is important to know what the reading process involves, and what they can do to improve their learning process.

The following chapter presents the study participants, location, instruments, data collection procedures, data sources as well as analysis procedures carried out in this research.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Chapter introduction

In this chapter the methodology used to carry out this research is described in detail along with the participants, the instrument, and the procedure followed by the data analysis. Since the purpose of the instrument was to gather information regarding students' attitudes towards reading, a survey research was done.

3.1 Study participants

A group of students of English as a foreign language was chosen. They were 24 students who have studied English for a period of six months in a public junior high school. This group was chosen following a cluster research sample which allowed the researcher to work with a specific group of people who share the same characteristics. They were 13 boys and 11 girls in an average age of 13 years old. The group was also selected due to the willingness of a professor who allowed the researcher to work with his students.

3.2 Study instruments

As stated in before, a survey research was carried out. This research method can be done by means of questionnaires or interviews in order to “determine people's perceptions, opinions, and attitudes about the situation being studied” (Criollo, 2003, p. 16). In order to accomplish the purpose of this research, the instrument used was a questionnaire.

A questionnaire consists of a series of questions and other prompts in order to gather information. Questions stated in a questionnaire can be closed or open. In the former ones the answers are determined by the researcher while in the last ones the

participants can decide what, why, and how to express their answer. Questionnaires have many advantages over some other types of surveys due to the fact that they are affordable, do not require as much effort as verbal or telephone surveys, and often have standardized answers. Furthermore, “questionnaires are helpful in gathering information that is unique to individuals, such as attitudes or knowledge” (Data Collection Methods for Program Evaluation: Questionnaires, 2008, p. 1). However, they have disadvantages too. When using closed questions, participants are forced to choose only one alternative. And if opened questions are used, responses can be sometimes difficult to analyse.

The questionnaire designed for this research consisted of eight questions. There were five closed questions and three open ones. The questionnaire was helpful to get information about the participants; for instance, gender, age, beliefs and attitudes towards reading, obstacles they face when they read, what they need to get motivated in order to be willing to read as well as what they think about reading in Spanish and English. In addition information gathered can indicate what students do for coping with written communication.

3.3 Data handling procedures

First of all, the instrument had to be designed. The researcher thought of the different questions that could help gather information to answer the research questions. The instrument was developed in Spanish since students were at the very basic level of English. Then the appropriate vocabulary was chosen so that the participants could answer without getting confused. Then it was revised, piloted and later on it was administered to the participants.

It should be mentioned that the participants were not very enthusiastic at the beginning since they considered the questionnaire to be very extensive. However, they

managed to get the instrument answered. After that, the questionnaires were collected and the data was gathered from the responses by building categories. Then, some figures were made and most of the information was processed in Excel by using percentages to illustrate the results.

3.4 Chapter conclusion

This chapter describes the methodology used to carry out this research. In conclusion, the data obtained was useful to identify students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading in English and Spanish.

In the next chapter I will present the results in detail. Furthermore, a very narrow but specific description of each question as well as the results obtained will be presented.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

4.0 Chapter Introduction

In order to find out junior high school students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading, it was necessary to investigate what students do for coping with written language since it was interesting to know what the reading comprehension process meant for them.

4.1 Research questions

To contextualize the results, the research questions are presented below:

RQ1 What are students' beliefs about reading in English?

RQ2 What are students' attitudes about reading in English?

4.2 Results

There were eight questions in the instrument used to carry out this research. From those questions, four were designed to get information about what students do for coping with written communication. They were questions number one, two, seven and eight. In the same way, questions three to six, were designed regarding students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading. In order for the reader to comprehend the data analysis, the description of each question will be done in the same order in which they appear in the instrument used.

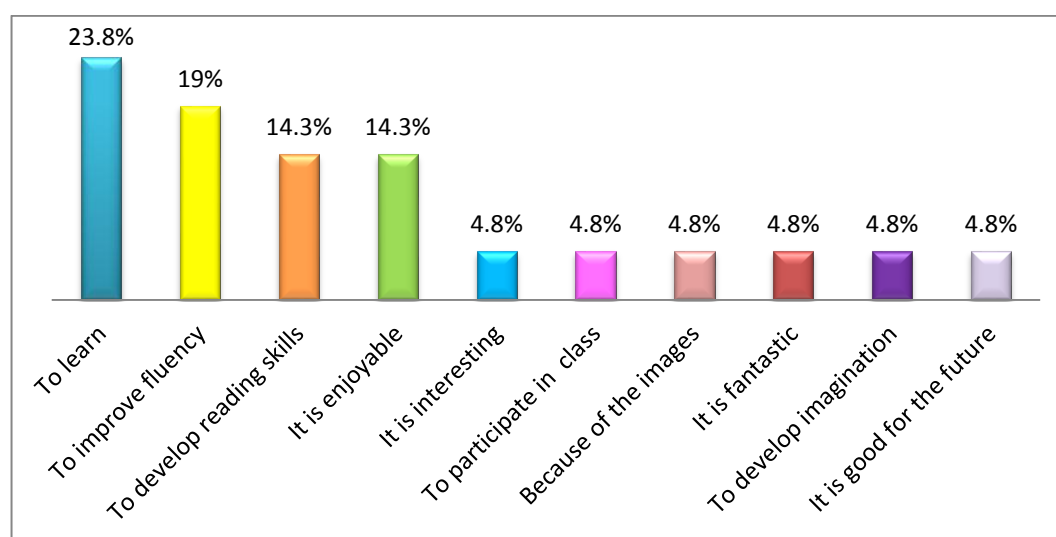
Question number one intended to get information regarding students' fondness of reading at school in their mother tongue. Therefore, students were asked if they liked reading or not in the classroom and why. To that question 17 students answered positively

while the other seven students mentioned they did not like reading. There were different reasons for those answers which will be presented in order of importance.

First of all, five students mentioned that learning through reading is the most important reason why they like reading. Moreover, four other students said that fluency can be improved if they read, so this was reason number two. Then, the enhancement of their reading comprehension was reason number three given by three students. There were two students who mentioned that for them, reading was an enjoyable activity.

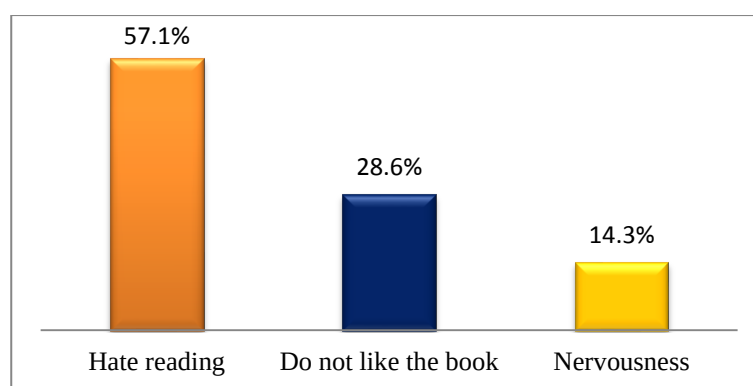
Finally, there were students who gave some other reasons; for example, reading for them is interesting or fantastic because if they read they can participate or give an answer if they are asked in the classroom. Some other answers given were: because of the images, because they use their imagination when reading, because it is good for a better future life, just because they like it or because they have nothing to do. Those results can be appreciated in the following figure.

Figure 4.1: *Reasons why students like reading in the classroom*



The rest of the students who answered negatively to that question expressed the following causes. First of all, four students simply answered that they just do not like reading. Then, two other mentioned they do not like the book they work with in the classroom, and finally, one of them said she feels nervous when she reads. The results can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: *Reasons why students do not like reading in the classroom*

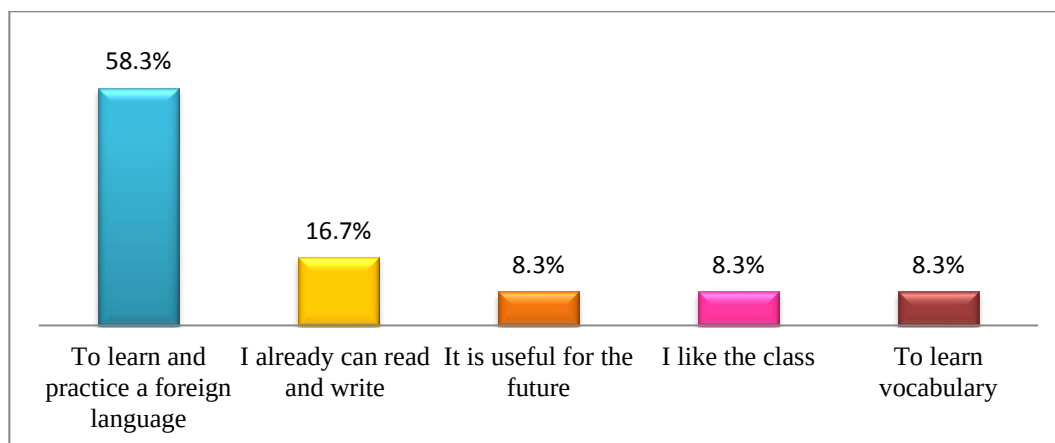


As a conclusion for this first question, it can be said that there are some students who are not very fond of reading because of the material used in the classroom because they are afraid to read in front of others or just because they do not like it.

Question number two intended to gather information related to the interest of students regarding the foreign language they were learning. Therefore, students were asked whether or not they liked reading in English and why. According to them, the most important reason why they enjoy reading is because they liked learning and practicing a foreign language, in this case English. The second reason was the fact that they already can write and speak in English, so it is easy for them to work in the classroom. The third reason was that English is useful for their future lives. It was also mentioned that reading

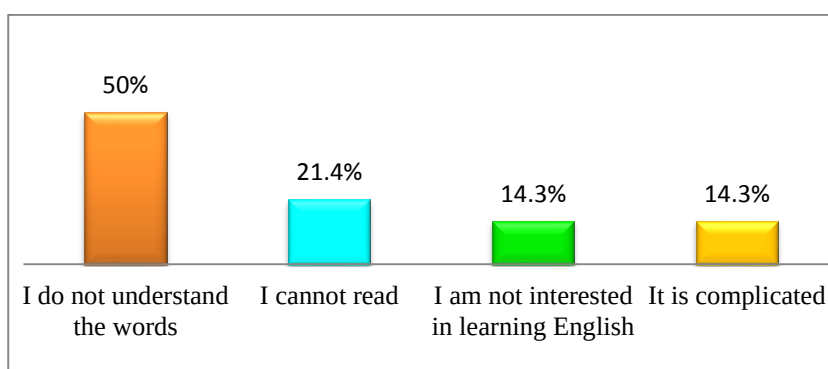
in English was a good way to learn vocabulary. Finally, they mentioned that they liked the class. The results can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 4.3: *Reasons why students like reading in English*



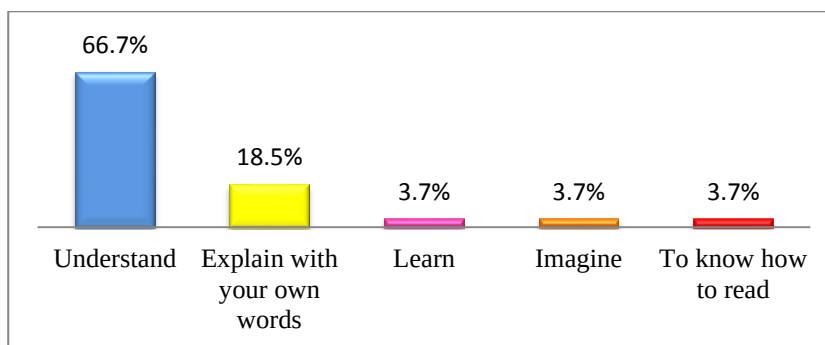
The reasons why students do not like reading in English are related mainly with vocabulary. It was found out that the understanding of new or unknown vocabulary is the main obstacle for students. Another problem they face is pronunciation; they mentioned they are not able to read properly, they are even afraid of mispronouncing. Then, some others said English is a complicated language, and finally, others mentioned that English is not a language they felt attracted to. The results can be appreciated in the following graph.

Figure 4.4: *Reasons why students do not like reading in English*



The objective of the third question was to know what students thought about comprehending a text. To which students answered the following:

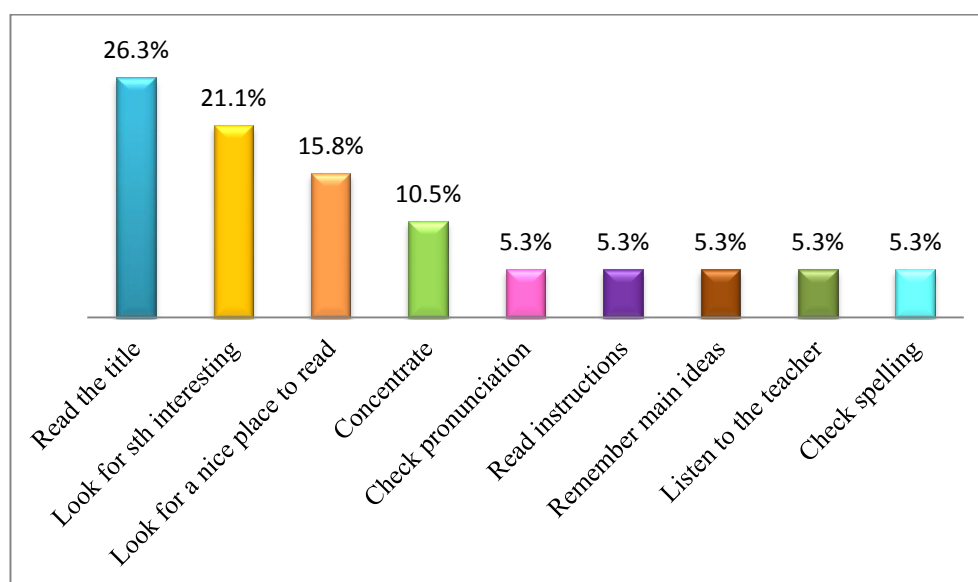
Figure 4.5: Results of what “reading comprehension” means for students



As it can be seen, most of students think that reading means understanding what the reading is about. Next, 18.5 per cent of them believe that comprehending a text means explaining with your own words the content of the reading. Then, with the same percentages, students answered that comprehending a text means learning, imagining, and knowing how to read.

The fourth question was oriented to knowing what students do when they deal with written language. The question stated was: *what is the first thing you do when you read a text?* To which students gave different responses that can be appreciated in the following figure.

Figure 4.6: *Actions students do when they read a text*



As shown in Fig. 4.6 above, the first action that 26.3 per cent of students do when they are going to read is to see the title in order to find out what the reading will be about. 21.1 per cent of students mentioned that they usually look for something attractive to read while 15.8 per cent of the participants said that they prefer looking for a nice place to read. Some other students said they concentrate on the reading; they were 10.5 per cent of the participants. Those were the main four points mentioned by students. Some other answers were related to spelling and pronunciation. Thus, each category has 5.3 per cent which shows that students normally revise the way words are written as well as the way they should be pronounced. With the same percentage some other categories can be seen in the figure. For instance, reading the instructions, listening to the teacher's instructions and remembering the main ideas.

The fifth question was related to the previous one. What the researcher wanted to know was how easy or how difficult was for students to comprehend a text written in

English. To this question many students answered that it is difficult for them to understand a text in English since they do not understand the words in that language, the pronunciation is difficult and they do not pay much attention when they read. The rest of the participants answered that it is easy for them to understand a text written in English because they like learning English, they pay attention, and they are already able to recognize some words. The findings can be appreciated in the following figures.

Figure 4.7: *Aspects that prevent students from understanding a text in English*

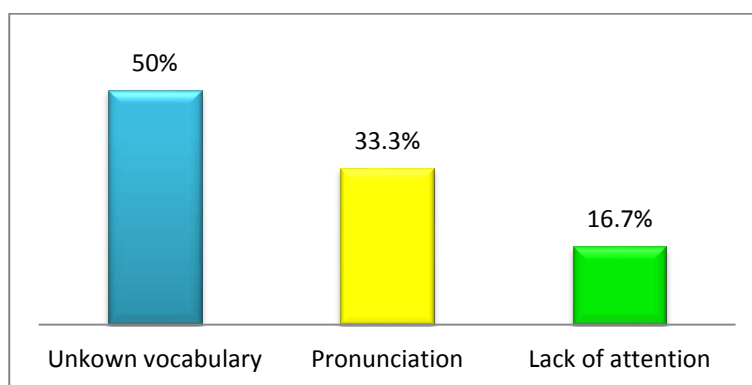
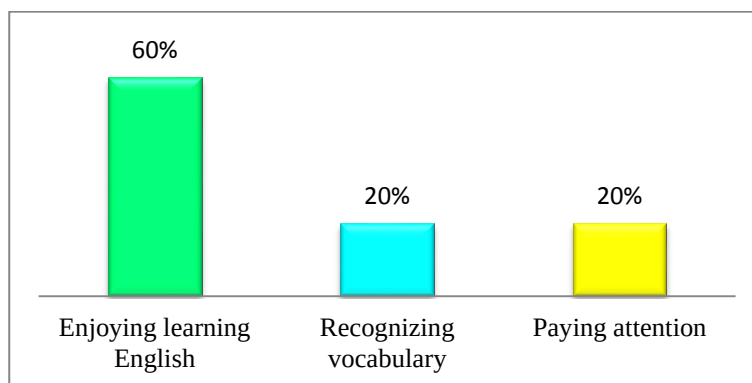


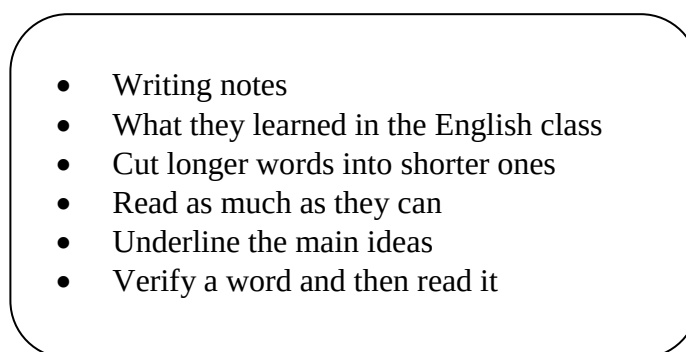
Figure 4.8: *Aspects that help students to comprehend a text in English*



The purpose of the sixth question was to find out whether or not students knew reading techniques or strategies. It was identified that they do not know what a technique is, nor do they know what a strategy represents. Some of them have an idea, but with the data obtained, it can be inferred that students have never been taught what the reading process involves or what they can do in order to get the information they could need depending on the different purposes of a reading in the classroom.

From the 24 students who participated in this research, 9 mentioned they do know reading strategies or techniques, while the other 15 students said they did not know any. The techniques and strategies mentioned are presented in the following figure.

Figure 4.9: *Reading techniques and strategies mentioned by students*

- 
- Writing notes
 - What they learned in the English class
 - Cut longer words into shorter ones
 - Read as much as they can
 - Underline the main ideas
 - Verify a word and then read it

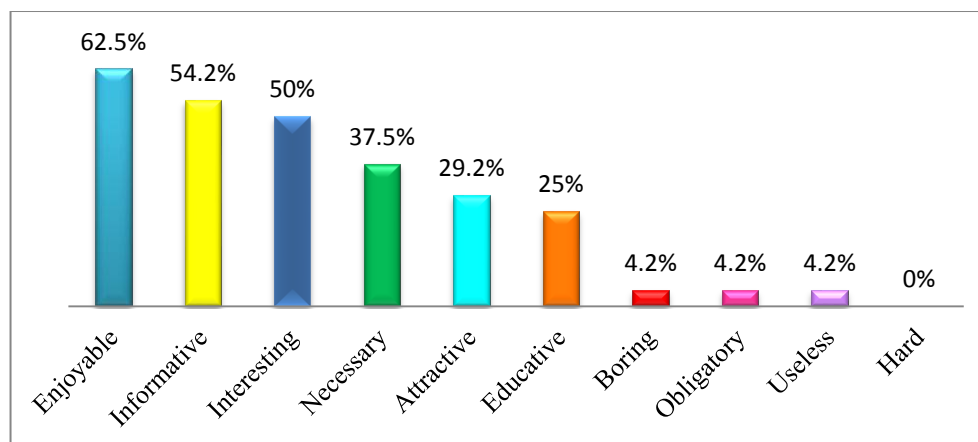
It may be inferred that students who learn a foreign language transfer some reading strategies or techniques from their mother tongue to the new language. Nevertheless, this cannot be taken for granted since *language transfer* occurs most of the time when students reach an intermediate level in the foreign language and the participants in this research were in the very basic level.

This demonstrates that they were possibly not taught how to read in their previous scholar stages – or if they were, they did not remember anything about reading strategies. Therefore, they do not know the existence of reading strategies and techniques, and as a result, they are not aware of the processes they do when they read.

It was very interesting for the researcher what students mentioned about their English class. It can be assumed that the English teacher of those students has taught them certain ways to cope with the language because students mentioned they do know strategies and techniques learned in their English class. Probably cutting long words into shorter ones is one of the teacher's techniques. It is not a reading strategy or technique at all, but it is undoubtedly a way to facilitate the pronunciation of long words used in the foreign language classroom which has been useful for some of the participants when reading in English.

The intention of the seventh question was to find out what sort of words students relate with reading; as a result, they had the option of crossing the word or words that best described their opinion. The results can be seen in the following figure.

Figure 4.10: Words students relate to “reading”



As expressed in Figure 4.10, reading for students can be primarily described as *enjoyable*; this word reached 62.5 per cent of the results. Secondly, 54.2 per cent, reading for them is *informative*. Then, 50 per cent of the participants pointed out that reading is *interesting*. 37.5 per cent of the students matched reading with the word *necessary*. Subsequently, the word *attractive* had the fifth place with 29.2 per cent. The word *educative* reached 25 per cent. *Boring*, *obligatory* and *useless* are categories with the same percentage; each of them are illustrated with 4.2 per cent. Finally, none of the students selected the word *hard* to describe the word “reading”.

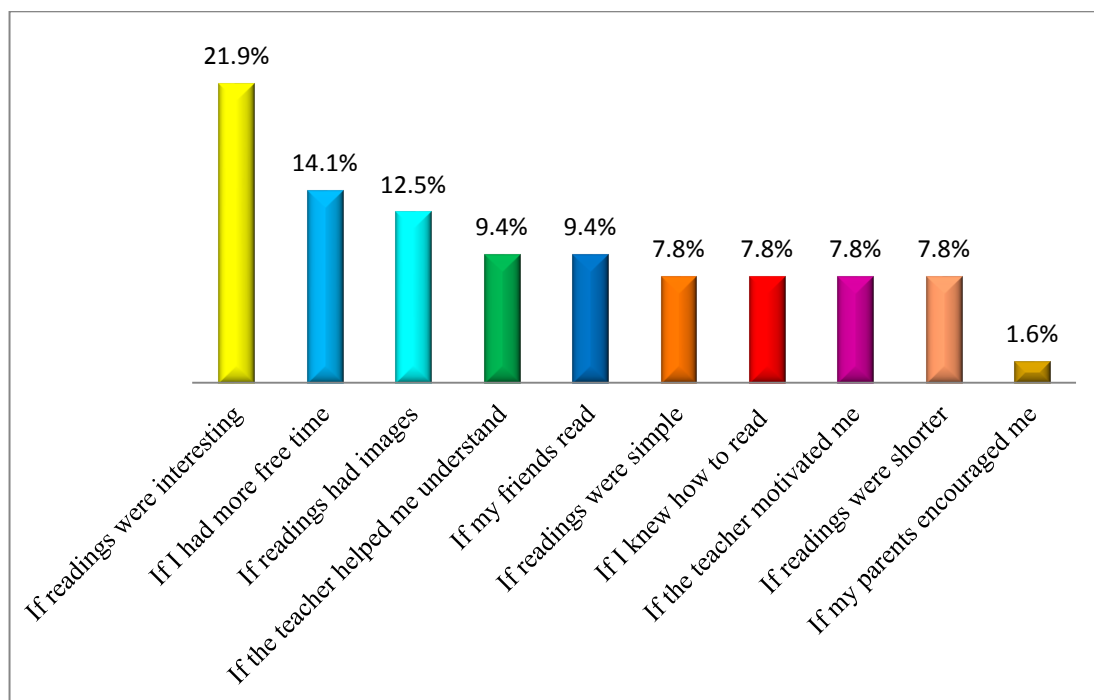
Finally, the purpose of the eighth question was to detect the possible issues that may encourage students to read in the classroom. There were ten possible options and students could choose as many as they wanted. The following paragraph presents the results.

In the first position, students pointed out that they would feel more encouraged to read if the readings were about topics they were interested in. The second factor that may encourage them is the time available to read; they agreed that they would read if they had more free time. Another important aspect for them is related to images; they claimed that if texts had more images, they would feel more attracted to reading. Some other issues such as the role of the teacher in the classroom and the people to whom students interact the most were also mentioned as very important.

Thus, participants mentioned that if the teacher helped them understand what they read, and if their friends also read, they would feel encouraged to reading. Those two factors appear in the Fig. 4.11 with 9.4 per cent of the results each one. Next, four more categories are illustrated with 7.8 per cent. Those are: if the readings were simple, if I knew reading techniques or strategies, if the teacher motivated me to read, and if readings

were shorter. Finally, 1.6 per cent of the participants said that they would read if their parents encouraged them to do it.

Figure 4.11: *Aspects that may encourage students to read*



The data analysis carried out previously can answer the research questions of this study. First of all, it can be said that students believe reading is an essential part of their academic and daily lives since they mentioned that reading is “good for the future” and that it is good “to learn and practice a foreign language”. Besides, some of them agreed that reading is enjoyable, informative and interesting. Nevertheless, it can be appreciated that for some other students reading was considered as a boring, obligatory and useless activity. Students who gave similar answers expressed reluctance to reading in the classroom, to the book and a negative attitude not only to the texts written in their mother tongue, but also written in English.

As Seitz (2010, p. 31) states, “students who do not enjoy typical school texts often fail to engage in reading, and may develop a lifelong aversion to reading”. Thus, it is of great importance to motivate students by means of task labelled according to their real learning level. When performing the tasks, students should be able to do them without having many difficulties so that they do not feel frustrated and give up. In current research it has been found that “tasks completed with high rates of success were clearly linked to greater learning and improved student attitudes, while tasks where students were moderately successful were less consistently related to learning and hard tasks had a negative impact on learning. Hard tasks also produced off-task behaviors and negative attitudes (Berliner 1981 in Seitz 2010, p. 31)”.

It was also found that negative attitudes towards reading in English are due to lack of vocabulary, lack of confidence and nervousness when reading out loud. Thus, it is necessary that the teacher creates a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom where students feel free to make mistakes and learn from them rather than feeling helpless and afraid of mispronouncing. In the researcher’s opinion, teachers should remember how they learned English. It was, for sure, complicated at some point in their lives, so they should be more patient with their students. Teaching and learning vocabulary, for example, does not have to be a dull activity. It can be, in fact, fun and attractive for students if the teacher challenges them or plays with them.

A quite important issue found is that students are not aware of what they do to get the information they search in a text when they read or perform certain task. As a consequence, they get distracted very easily or get desperate and do not finish the task. What is more, they develop negative attitudes towards reading.

Even though students make use of some reading strategies, it is necessary that the teacher help them to develop or improve some strategies to comprehend better a text. When students know that there are different possibilities to arrive to the same way, then they are able to decide what, why, and how they will perform certain task and, subsequently, they will achieve or perform a task successfully

In addition, the data obtained regarding beliefs and attitudes towards reading demonstrates that it is possible to design consciousness raising tasks activities. Of course, those activities should be focused on reflective issues that help students realise about the importance of the reading comprehension process. In order to design consciousness raising tasks, it may be useful to discover students' interests, likes and dislikes before choosing the material which will be used in the classroom because students will be motivated if they work with material they like.

4.3 Chapter conclusion

As a conclusion, it can be said that identifying students' learning styles as well as the type or types of intelligence they possess may result very valuable to organize and design a lesson in which students become aware of the importance of reading in every aspect of their daily lives. Besides, it is necessary to turn students' negative beliefs and attitudes into positive ones as well as motivate them and help them realise that reading is not a useless activity, but a multifaceted one which can be very fun and interesting.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

5.0 Chapter overview

In this chapter a summary of the findings and their significance will be provided. Furthermore, the implications of the study, the main limitations of the study, directions for further research as well as the final thoughts will be presented.

5.1 Findings and their significance

The data analysis carried out in this study successfully answer the research questions stated in chapter one. The aim of such questions was to know students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading.

As mentioned in Chapter IV, students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading are different from student to student depending on their personality, interests, likes, dislikes, motivation, learning style, previous learning experiences, among other aspects. On the one hand, many students know that reading is an important activity that may affect their academic and professional life. On the other hand, there were also students who stated that they hate reading in both, Spanish and English.

In conclusion, negative attitudes toward reading are due to the beliefs students have already internalized and which they have created through their learning experiences and the contact with the world around them. In order to change students perception about reading it is recommended to label reading activities in the classroom according to the their real language level, their previous and current knowledge as well as their life experiences, their interests, attitudes and abilities. In that way, students' motivation could be raised and their

negative beliefs and attitude towards reading may turn into positive ones. Besides, they require instruction in reading techniques and strategies.

5.2 Implications

This study pointed out students' beliefs and attitudes towards reading under a junior high school panorama. Thus, the instrument designed had the purpose of gathering information to investigate students' attitudes towards reading.

The data analysis carried out as well as the results suggest that many of the students participating in this research had never been instructed on reading comprehension. Besides, it can be inferred that **reading is not part of their daily lives**. Consequently, when working with writing language in the classroom they do not know what exactly can be done in order to fulfil the demands of the teacher. It is important to make them reflect on the significance of the act of reading not only in the classroom but in every context of their lives. If they become aware of the wide range of advantages that becoming a good reader represents, they will definitely pay more attention to the reading comprehension process and its implications.

In order to do so, it would be helpful if teachers stop using reading with the only purpose of teaching vocabulary or measuring the speed of students to answer a series of questions. Teachers should present reading to their students as a fun activity. They should also explain to the students that there are different types of readings, that there are reading techniques and that they are able to use cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, but they need to improve them in order to become good readers. The use of a student-centred paradigm is also important because students are the main character in their own learning process. Therefore, conscious-raising tasks focused on reading are necessary so that

students can reflect on what they know, what they do, what they can do, why and how will they perform something, why they did certain actions rather than others, and the repercussions of their acts on every aspect of their daily lives. Finally, only by leading students towards a reflective path, will they become aware of the importance of the reading comprehension process.

5.3 Limitations of the study

The conclusions of the present paper are based on the results found in the data analysis. The data analysed was gathered through a questionnaire answered by a public junior high school group of English as a foreign language. Even though the questionnaire was revised and piloted, it may be possible that it was slightly complicated for students to answer and that their responses were not accurate enough. Furthermore, the instrument was administered only to one group. It would have been better to work with two or three more groups in order to obtain more precise information. Another possible limitation may be the number of boys and girls. In this research, there were more male participants than female; thus, having the same number of male and females would have been the ideal research sample. It is hoped, however, that the findings of this study will be significant for teachers whose work is focused mainly on reading aspects.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

This research provides helpful information to designing conscious-raising tasks focused on reading. Therefore, doing research about the use of the task-based approach in reading would be helpful for both, students and teachers since working in different tasks will prevent the students from getting bored and developing negative beliefs and attitudes

towards reading. Moreover, the main point of using a task is to give students the chance to become the main characters in their own learning process. Such tasks should be administered possibly with two different groups. The teacher may work with one group using conscious-raising tasks and work with the other group without any task. Through the course, observations can be done in order to see if there are positive or negative effects on students. Moreover, at the end of the course, assessment could be done in order to discover if students' beliefs or attitudes towards reading have changed. Possibly, instruments used to measure how mature a person is in terms of reading could be also applied. Finally, this research could be also enhanced with information related to *extensive reading* as well as *introspection* which is a very interesting but complex topic that most of the teachers leave aside.

5.5 Final thoughts

After nine months of having started writing this thesis, the section called *final thoughts* has been reached. It does not mean this is the end of a project but the beginning of a new stage. Through all the expected and unexpected situations experienced while writing this paper, it can be said that dedication, patience and passion for what we do represent a rewarding feeling that demonstrates how capable a person is to achieve whatever she proposes herself.

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APPENDIX A: Students' questionnaire

Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla
Facultad de Lenguas Modernas

El presente cuestionario ha sido desarrollado con la finalidad de obtener información que indique la actitud de alumnos de nivel medio superior hacia la lectura.

La información proporcionada permanecerá anónima. Gracias por participar. ☺

Edad: _____

Género: F ☐
M ☐

Instrucciones: Selecciona la respuesta que mejor indique lo que piensas cuando trabajas con lecturas en el salón de clases.

1. ¿Te gusta leer en la escuela?

a) Sí b) No

¿Por qué?

2. ¿Te gusta leer en inglés?

a) Sí b) No

¿Por qué?

3. Para ti, ¿qué significa comprender una lectura?

4. ¿Qué es lo primero que haces cuando vas a leer un texto?

5. ¿Qué tan fácil o qué tan difícil es para ti comprender un texto en inglés?

6. ¿Conoces estrategias o técnicas de lectura?

a) Sí b) No

Si tu respuesta fue si ¿Cuáles?

Instrucciones: Marca con una "x" la opción u opciones que mejor describan tu opinión sobre las siguientes dos preguntas.

7. ¿Cuál de las siguientes palabras usarías para describir la palabra "leer"?

☐	Divertido	☐	Informativo	☐	Educativo	☐	Interesante	☐	Necesario
☐	Aburrido	☐	Atractivo	☐	Obligatorio	☐	Difícil	☐	Inútil

8. ¿Cuál de las siguientes opciones te animaría a leer en el salón de clases?

☐	Si tuviera más tiempo libre	☐	Si mis amigos leyeran
☐	Si las lecturas fueran sobre temas de mi interés	☐	Si mis papás me animaran a leer
☐	Si las lecturas tuvieran imágenes	☐	Si el profesor me motivara a leer
☐	Si las lecturas fueran cortas	☐	Si el profesor me ayudara a entender lo que leo
☐	Si las lecturas fueran sencillas	☐	Si supiera qué estrategias o técnicas utilizar para comprender lo que leo

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