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**Reading Comprehension Problems at the Instituto
de Compuingles de Oriente**

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Instituto de Compungles de Oriente was created as an answer to the current necessity of learning English and Computing. This institute offers the technician English career whose educational program is called “World English”. This program is supported by Heinle, part of Cengage Learning and National Geographic have teamed up to create materials for teaching English, which allow to experience different cultures through printed texts and multimedia that include the four skills. The book has a reading activity in every unit.

1.2 Problem

Students were in the intermediate level and I realized they had problems with reading comprehension. The things I perceived were they did not like reading, they thought reading was boring, they had problems with reading comprehension activities, when I asked about the reading everybody was silent, and it seems they did not apply reading strategies. All these events made me feel interested in researching about reading comprehension problems, reading strategies, motivation.

1.3 Justification

One of the most important problems in Mexican education is the reading comprehension. A person who does not use reading strategies is unable to have a good level of this competence and faces demands that this world requires. On the other hand, when reading comprehension is faced in a foreign language, subjects have difficulty understanding different types of texts despite the fact that they know the words and structures. It is important to teach students reading strategies in order to help them understand any text written in English.

1.4 Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to find different strategies to help students with their lack of reading comprehension in a foreign language in the Compuingles de Oriente Institute with intermediate level students. At the end of this research the result will show the way to face students reading comprehension problems in order to improve it and develop effectively this important skill.

1.5 Research Questions

RQ1. – What are the principal factors that influence in the participants’ reading comprehension in the institute of Compuingles de Oriente?

RQ2. - What kind of strategies and skills did the participants use in order to comprehend the text?

1.6 Significance of the Study

I consider that this research will help me to comprehend better the reading process in order to find the way to teach reading comprehension in a FLA according to the necessities of the students, to detect the main problems that students faced in reading and help them to improve this important competence. I will know what strategies are the adequate to apply, what kind of reading material is the best for teaching reading comprehension.

The teaching area will benefit from this research because reading comprehension is a strong national education problem; and reading in a FL becomes more difficult. This study may give the tools to teaching in an effective way reading comprehension and avoid student's problems in this skill.

At LEMO as many parts around the world there are learners of a FL with reading comprehension problems, this research will help teachers to understand and face this common problem and provide enough information in order to achieve the lack of comprehension being able to respond to the demands of this world.

Students of the Zaragoza Institute are expected to have an improvement in their reading skill in a FL and comprehend better many different readings using strategies and techniques. They will monitor the process of comprehension and students will be able to correspond to the demands of this competence.

1.7 Definitions of Terms

- 1 **Reading:** is the process of interpretation or interpreting printed material (Stauffer, 2005).
- 2 **Reading process:** it is a Cognitive process of decoding symbols in order to construct or derive meaning (Smith 2004).
- 3 **Reading Comprehension:** it is defined as the level of understanding of a text (ibid)
- 4 **Reading in a second language:** it is a cognitive process of interpreting a text in a L2 (Nuttall, 1992).
- 5 **Reading Strategy:** They are tools used during the reading process in order to comprehend in a better way the reading (Jimenez, 2000).
- 6 **Reading Activities:** these are different activities that the teacher and students can apply to practice reading comprehension (Stauffer, 2005).
- 7 **Reading Monitoring:** the reader is aware of the reading process and perceives his errors in order to improve them (Alderson, 2005).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Reading

Reading is a process to obtain meaning from a written text. Reading is also regarded as a reaction to a written text (Williams, 1996). On the other hand with a similar definition Goodman's (1997) said that reading is a receptive language process, where there is an essential interaction between language and thought. Another point of view in the second language is that reading has been defined as an active process, where the reader needs to derive meaning from the word combinations in the text (Littlewood, 2006).

Upton (2004) with one of the most current views on the subject expressed reading as an interactive and constructive process in which the reader uses cultural and personal knowledge to interpret information presented in a text in order to create meaning. Finally according to these different definitions from specialized authors in this field, reading is an active process in which the reader has to be able to use all their knowledge in order to create meaning of the text that is being read.

2.2 Reading Process

Smith (2004) was one of the first researchers to characterize reading as process by charting the reader's path through a text rather than making judgments of comprehension based on reading outcomes. However Goodman (1997) presented the reading process in which the reader makes use of three cue systems, represented by three levels of language within the text, syntactic and semantic. In other words, first, readers make use of their knowledge of visual and phonetic features of English, second, they draw on knowledge of syntactic

constrains, such as possible kinds of word order in English and third, they are aware of semantic constrains related to knowledge of meaning of words and what kind of words collocate with others.

Aebersold and Field (1997) argue reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text, the text and the reader are two physical entities necessary for the reading process to begin. Another definition is that Reading process is a complex interaction between the text, the reader and the purposes for reading, which are shaped by the reader's prior knowledge and experiences, the reader's knowledge about reading and writing language and the reader's language community which is culturally and socially situated (Smith, 2004)

2.3 Reading Comprehension

According to Blachowicz & Ogle (2008), comprehension is the purpose of reading: it encompasses the learning, growing, and evolution of ideas that occur as one reads. Besides Polsell & Snow (2003) said that most accounts of reading comprehension process focus on three elements: the text being read, the background knowledge possessed by the reader, and contextual aspects relevant to interpreting the text. Another element that is important in reading comprehension is the reader's intent, the importance of intent is apparent without much thought. In academic contexts, students are expected to develop such ability on their own because the teacher cannot always remain by their side when they are reading.

Furthermore, Grellet (1981) points that understanding a written text means extracting the required information efficiently and according to Goodman (1997) there are some aspects

that should be taken into account while dealing with reading in a foreign language. He presents that in order to read comprehensively, it is important to understand the way the text is organized as well as its contents, learners must be aware of the function of the text to be able to get its meaning or message.

Furthermore, reading for meaning according to Goodman (1997) involves two kinds of skills, one to decode information and the other to relate the obtained information to prior knowledge of the word. The first one emphasizes the use of knowledge specially related to language necessary to decode elements such as cohesion, recognition of semantic structures and punctuation, and the other emphasizes the pre-existing knowledge.

2.4 Reading Models

In the last 20 years researchers have been studying the relation between the reading process and how to teach reading. As a result of these previous research studies, models of reading have been developed. This means that a model of reading is a graphic attempt to depict how an individual perceives a word, processes a clause, and comprehends the text (Aebersold&Field, 1997). There are three main models of how reading occurs.

Grabe (2009) argues that models characterize theories of reading, providing a way to represent a theory, they explain what reading involves and, in more detailed versions, how reading works. Grabe (2009) makes a classification of specific models of reading comprehension which are well recognized among reading researchers and used to explain current research findings. This author includes the following models that have been proposed in the past 20 years.

2.4.1 The Construction Integration Model

According to Grabe (2009) this model was first described by Kintsch (1998) in which it is combined the automatic bottom-up processing of connectionist activation with a restructuring process to create coherent discourse representation. This model depicts the reader as overgenerating information from the incoming text information that is consolidated by an integration process into a coherent representation that is added to the text model suppressing weakly activated and irrelevant information.

2.4.2 Structure Building Framework

This model according to Grabe(2009) focuses primarily on the way that discourse comprehension is created through sentences by sentences processing. This model argues that individual differences in reading comprehension can be attributed to the operation of five discourse comprehension process outlined in Table 1.

Table 1 Five processes in structure building

1. Laying a foundation
2. Mapping on the foundation
3. Shifting to a new foundation
4. Suppressing information
5. Entraining information

Grabe (2009, p. 93)

According to Gabre (2009) in this model when an initial text segment is read, the text building process takes that initial input and lays a foundation for comprehension. As new text segments are processed, key information is mapped onto the foundation by means of referent overlap pronouns and antecedents, use of definite articles, simple bridging inferences, and other devices.

2.4.3 The Compensatory-Encoding Model

According to Gabre (2009) this model was first developed by Walczyk (2001). This model adopts the basic assumptions of the Verbal Efficiency Model, and adds a compensatory component as a required and expected part of the comprehension model. The model argues the metacognitive process such as goal checking, monitoring comprehension, and adding-strategy use are more central to reading comprehension and lower-level processes. The general implication of this model is that controlled processing, metacognition, and strategy uses may play more predictive roles in comprehension processing when there is a relative lack of time pressure as is true in many assessment tasks.

2.5 Reading in a FL

Since many years ago some researchers such as Carrell(1998), Goodman (1997) and Grabe (1991) have looked at how people process print when reading in English as a foreign language. They consistently found that the process is essentially the same whether reading English as the first or second language. In other words, both first and second language

readers look at the page and the print and use their knowledge of sound/symbol relationships, word order, grammar and meaning to predict and confirm meaning.

However, according to Koda (2005) there are two important differences between the comprehension of a text in L1 and FL and these are the second language proficiency and background knowledge. When English learners read texts that are fairly easy for them, their reading provides comprehensible input that promotes English language acquisition. Although Koda (2005) argues that reading in the L1 shares numerous important basic elements with reading in a second or foreign language, the processes also differ greatly. Intriguing questions involve whether there are two parallel cognitive processes at work, or whether there are processing strategies that accommodate both first and second languages.

Despite these interests, Grabe's (2009) second language research on reading is frequently dismissed as being marginal and derivative from first language reading. Reading in a second language, for example, was often viewed as merely a slower version of doing the same task in the native language. Such comparisons, however, imply that second language tasks are mapping tasks – that is replacing one mode of behavior with another.

It is important to point that for many students, reading is by far the most important of the four skills in the second language, particularly in English as a second or foreign language. However, only recently has second language or foreign language reading been viewed as an active process, this means that readers need to be encouraged to take an active stance in their reading, asking questions and looking for points of agreement or disagreement with the author as they read. According to Carrel (1998) a failure to relate the linguistic

meaning of a reading passage to cultural factors would result in something less than total comprehension.

On the other hand, in a study made by the University of Malaya whose purpose was to provide insights into the extent of L1 use while reading L2 texts in a collaborative situation among ESL learners it was found there was a tendency to resort to the L1 when students were faced with difficulties that hindered their comprehension. The study is also aimed at discovering possible reasons for the use of L1 while comprehending L2 text. It was found that the L1 was used by all the students in the study and that more than the 30% of the total instances of the strategy in this case “think aloud” involved the L1.

The study also revealed various reasons for the students’ use of the L1 while reading text in the L2 texts particularly in the context of group reading. One reason was that the L1 facilitated resolutions of word-related and idea-related difficulties. Furthermore, using the L1 might have helped the students reduce affective barriers and gain more confidence in tracking the L2 texts.

In another research study made by O’Malley, M & Uhl(1994) of the University of Arizona was found that the reading in an L1 is similar to and different from reading in an L2. Reading in both contexts requires knowledge of content, formal, and linguistic schema. According to O’Malley &Uhl (1994) reading is a meaning-making process involving an interaction between the reader and the text. Readers use mental activities in order to construct meaning from text. Williams (1996) argues that these activities are generally referred to as reading strategies or reading skills. The final point of the two researchers is

that successful L1 and L2 readers will consciously or unconsciously engage in specific behaviors to enhance their comprehension of texts.

2.6 Problems in Reading in a FL

Perogy & Boyle (2005) point that reading comprehension can be affected by the second language proficiency, besides the student's prior knowledge of the topic is another important factor that helps to have a better understanding of the text. The background knowledge facilitates comprehension of written stories by helping readers to predict where the story is leading. English learners may experience reading difficulties related to limited second language proficiency and background knowledge that does not match the topic of a particular text. In other words, the background knowledge is important being that helps to connect what is already know with what the text says, nevertheless prior knowledge is often ignored in discussions of text reading.

According to Alderson (2005) the results of a research made on Irish students support the view that reading in a language which is not the learner's first language is a source of considerable difficulty. Also it was observed that besides taking considerably longer to read a text, students who understood the words and structures of the text under study were still unable to understand totally what they read in the second language. Alderson (2005) comments an experience as a teacher in Mexico, a reason their students cannot read

adequately in English is that they cannot read adequately in the native language, in the first place.

Koda (2005) says that the “second language may contain a linguistic base that is syntactically, phonetically, semantically, and rhetorically distinct from the target language. As previously discussed, schema plays an important role in reading comprehension”. An L2 reader who is not familiar with culturally based knowledge or content schema, or a reader who does not possess the same linguistic base as the L1 reader will encounter difficulties. Such difficulties may be greater when there is a greater difference between the L1 and the L2. For example, syntactic structure in a second language student’s native language is very different from that of the target language, a greater degree of cognitive restructuring is required.

Grabe (1991) also notes that the knowledge base is different from a L1 and L2 reader. This means that the L1 reader already has an enough vocabulary base and know thousands of words before they actually start to read. Besides, they also have some grammatical knowledge of their own language. L2 readers on the other hand, do not share these advantages. Another aspect is that L2 reader also have difficulties because they do not have social cultural skills, therefore the reader is unable to perceive text in a culturally way.

Many previous studies have found that poor reading in a foreign language is due to inadequate knowledge of the target language, for example Hudson (1998) in his research the results show that readers who have a low reading understanding in their L1 was because of the lack of use of reading strategies, also readers do not have a prior knowledge of the text, which generates several difficulties reading in L2. Another study in Mexican

University Students concluded that the best predictor of reading ability in a foreign language was not reading ability in the mother tongue.

2.7 Motivation in Reading in a Second Language

The motivation that students have in reading in a FL is important to get comprehension proficiency. McKenna (1994) wrote that the study of motivation has been traditionally been concerned with the arousal, direction, and the persistence of behavior. Stauffer (2005) created a motivation model “expectancy + value” in which people do what they expect to accomplish successfully and tend to avoid what they expect they cannot accomplish.

Taking into account this model in terms of reading, unless students have a reasonable expectation that they will be able to read a book with understanding, they will most likely not begin the undertaking.

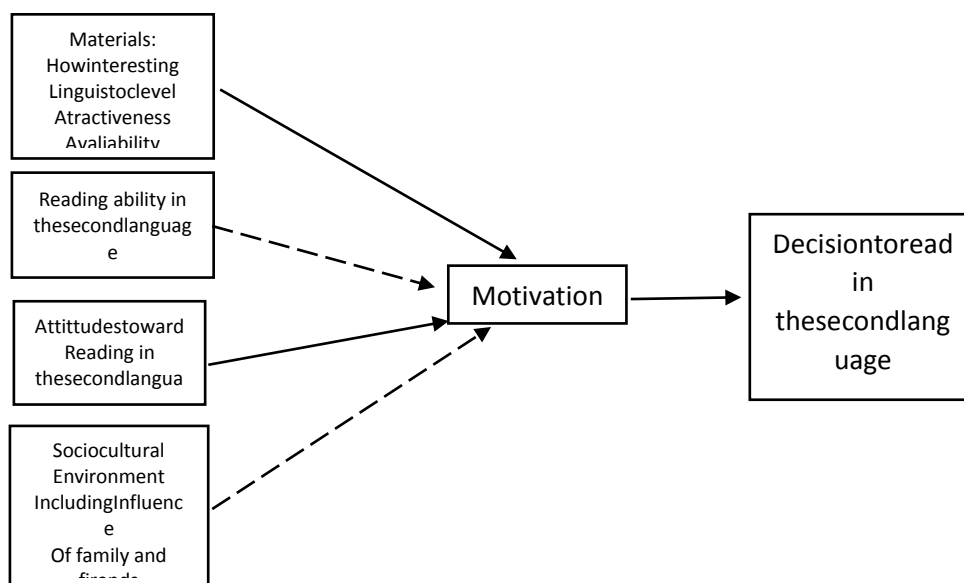


Figure 1 Model of major variables motivating the decision to read in a second language by Day and Bamford (1998) pag. 28

This figure is an expectancy + value model of motivation in the context of second language reading. According to Day&Bamford (1998) “there are four major variables: materials, reading ability, attitudes and sociocultural environment-are seen as motivation the desire to read a second language.” Two of these variables -materials and reading ability- relate to the expectation of success in reading in a FL, and two -attitudes and sociocultural environment- relate to the value attached to reading the FL.

The reading material used in the class sometimes is a problem when it does not seem interesting, it is not appropriate to the level of the learners, and it is not readily available. Williams (1996) says that interesting texts are vital to increase motivation, which in turn is a significant factor in the development of reading speed and fluency.

Low-level reading ability is normally lower expectation of success, and thus lower the motivation to read. If students do not have a good level of this skill they face frustration of having to read material beyond their reading capabilities. As well the environment can counteract the influence of society, family and friends if they are less than encouraging toward reading.

2.8 Students' Attitudes in FL reading

McKenna (1994) states that an attitude is a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event. This author argues that "Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor"(pag, 24).

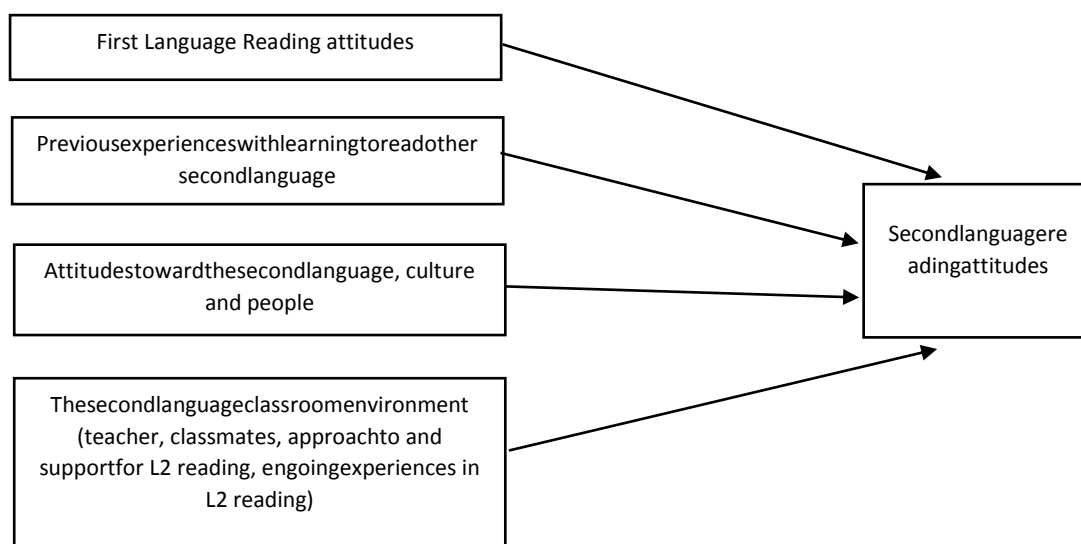


Figure 2 Model of the acquisition and development of second language reading attitudes by Day and Bamford (1998))pag. 23

McKenna (1994) developed a model called "Toward a Model of Reading Attitude Acquisition" in which there are four sources of students' attitude toward FL reading. One source of attitudes toward FL reading is the attitude that students have toward reading in their native language. "Students for whom first language reading is attractive or important will come to second language reading with less than positive, or even negative, attitudes".

Talking about previous experiences with learning to read second languages students have faced before is a factor that influences their attitudes toward reading in the new language. Unsuccessful experiences can turn students off even before the process of learning to read in the new language. The third source are Attitudes toward the second language, culture, and people can create positive attitudes that motivate students to read in the second language in order to get interesting information about the other country.

The last source is the second language environment which involves favorable feelings for and experiences with the teacher, classmates, materials, activities, task procedures, and so on. If these factors are managed incorrectly, they can create unfavorable feelings and ongoing experiences can lead to negative attitudes.

2.9 Reading Comprehension Strategies

There have been many researchers about how or whether improve reading comprehension in FL. According to Smith (2004) reading strategies are the mental processes involved in accomplishing a reading task. They help readers approach a text effectively and make sense of what they read. According to Cohen (1990) it is important the correct use of reading strategies. The success depends on the kind of text, the strategy used, the reader's purpose and the context. In order to choose a strategy it has to take into account the kind of text and the kind of learner.

However, if a learner has an effective use of reading strategies in the L1 it does not mean that in the FL can be the same. In another point of view Nutttal (1992) argues that skills can

be transferred from one language to another so the work done in the foreign language may be beneficial in the L1.

McNamara (2012) brings forward a diagram which consists in a 4-pronged comprehension strategy framework that consists of Monitoring Comprehension and Reading Strategies in the center of the framework and four categories of strategies that comprise the prongs of it , the diagram includes: a) Preparing to read; b) Interpreting words, sentences and ideas in text; c) going beyond the text; and d) Organizing, restructuring, and synthesizing information in the text.

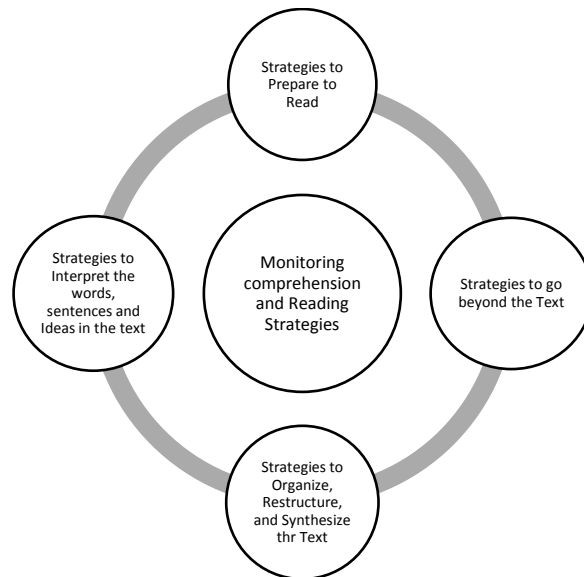


Figure 3 Monitoring Comprehension and Reading Strategies by McNamara (20012) Pag.

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McNamara (2012) describes that the first underlying notion of this framework is that the reader's mental representation of a text consists of multiple levels of comprehension, and the principal levels are the textbase and the situation model. The textbase is the reader's understanding of the words and sentences that are explicitly presented in the text. The

situational model is the reader’s understanding that goes beyond the text, which is an integration of the text with what the reader already knows about the world and the topic of the text.

According to McNamara (2012) the second theoretical notion that drives this framework is that successful readers construct coherent mental representations from text by actively processing and integrating concepts from the text and related concepts.

2.9.1 Strategies to use before, while, after reading

According to Robb (1996) strategies used before reading activate what learners already know and have experienced. Strategies employed while reading emphasize understanding and recalling information. Post- reading strategies invite students to reason and think with text information, make connections to other situations, enlarge vocabulary, gain new information, and question to learn more.

Strategies to use before reading	Strategies to use while reading	Strategies to use after reading
[These activate past knowledge and experiences]	[These use past Knowledge to recall and understood]	[These expand past knowledge and help create new understandings]
Brainstorm	Reading rate	Confirm predictions
Predict	Predict	Skim
Browse	Questions	Visualize
Skim	Reread	Question
Question	Summarize	Reread
Vocabulary Prediction	Self-correct	Think-Aloud
Vocabulary Web	Visualize	Retell
Fast write	Identify Confusing Parts	Note-taking

	Monitor Vocabulary	Reflect through: Writing
	Monitor Understanding	Venn Diagram
	Context Clues	Infer

Robb (1966) contends that L2 reading process requires thinking about thinking, besides readers need to monitor their own reading. The use of strategies facilitates the goal progress and achievement of the reading, also strategies assist reader to consider their thinking process before, during and after reading.

2.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter focused on explaining the most important concepts related to this investigation by the support of different authors and their research studies in this field of reading. The sources were taken in order to write clear explanations of the topics that appear in this chapter. The following chapter describes the methodology used.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the methodology used in this research. It explains the questionnaire which was designed to find the main problems students face when they are reading in a FL. This chapter also describes the subjects who participated in this research, the context and the procedure.

3.1 Context

The institute of Compuingles de Oriente is a private school; there are 26 institutes in different states in Mexico. Its mission is to form people able to work in different fields in the Mexican work system, and the vision is to label the institute as one of the best schools in the country, in order to cover the necessities of the society.

One of the 26 institutes is located in Tlaxcala, which has 13 years giving different educational services. This institute offers three different majors in computing and two in English. This research is going to focus on “World English”, one of the majors for adults. This major attempts that students develop the four skills of the language successfully; this group takes classes on Saturdays from 8:00 to 13:00 hrs.

3.2 Participants

The number of participants is 10, their ages are from 13 to 60 years old, and there are 6 males and 4 females. The students have the following scholar life: One student is in Middle School, two are in High School, five are in University, One is a secretary and the other is a cooker. They have an Intermediate level of English. I have noticed that they have problems

to comprehend a text. I want to know the reasons they have problems in reading comprehension.

3.3 Methodology

The methodology used in this research is qualitative because the field of study is among social science disciplines, in this case education. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), “Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matters. This means that make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p .246).

A qualitative methodology is used because the purpose of this research is getting a better understanding through firsthand experience, truthful reporting, and quotations of actual conversations, understand how the participants derive meaning from their surroundings, and how their meaning influences their behavior, focusing on reading strategies.

The qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (1998), “involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials-case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational historical, interactional and visual text-that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives” (p. 247).

3.4 Method

The method used in this research is Survey which is a systematic method of collecting data from a population of interest. According to Silverman (2006) “a survey tends to be

qualitative in nature and aims to collect information from a sample of the population so that the results are representative of the population within a certain degree of error” (p. 98). Furthermore, the purpose of a survey is to collect qualitative information, usually through the use of a structured and standardized questionnaire.

3.5 Instrument

Focusing on gathering information from the responses about which ones are their main problems in reading comprehension in the foreign language, a questionnaire is the instrument selected to collect the data. Open-ended questions was the type of questionnaire selected in order to get an honest, personal comment from the participants. The questionnaire simply puts the open-ended questions and leaves a space for a free response.

A questionnaire was taken from a similar research in the University of Chetumal, Macola (2007), -whose original idea was taken from Chamont et al. The reading Strategies Handbook- Moreover the questionnaire used in the University of Chetumal was multiple choice questions, for instance, the questions were modified into open questions in order to get another type of information. The objective of the questions is to have an idea of how much time the students dedicated to the skill of reading, which strategies they use to read. The first 5 questions contained general information, motivation, and reading experience, the next five questions were designed to detect pre-reading skills; the following three questions, were for while reading skills and the next five post-reading and critical reading skills.

Two readings were selected from the textbook “World English” that is the current material used by students. The first one, called “In your face” which comprehension was ranged with exercises from the book. The second reading called “The Carbon Connection” in which exercises were added in order to compare the first reading comprehension with the second. The exercises consisted of four parts: The first part was designed to see if the students could make predictions on the context and vocabulary of a text based on the title of the reading; part two where students had to skim in order to find the general idea. Part three was that students had to answer exercises from the book. And the last part was summary writing.

3.6 Data Collection Procedure

The first reading comprehension activity was applied on February 22nd 2012 at the Instituto de Compuingles de Oriente to an intermediate group, 10 students were selected by their age between 16-60 years. On March 1st 2013 the second reading comprehension activity was applied to the same students. On March 6th the questionnaires were administered in the English classes to the same students, then they answered the questionnaires and these were collected.

3.7 Data Analysis Procedure

Once the reading activities were applied, the pre-task and post-task reading activities were analyzed in order to find reading comprehension problems. Also the questionnaires were analyzed as follows: 1) the first four questions in order to know the students’ reading habits. 2) Five questions with the purpose of obtaining the strategies students use before the

reading. 3) Four questions with the intention to know what strategies are used by students when they read an English written text and 4) four questions in order to know what strategies are used by students after the reading.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This chapter presents and discusses the results of this research. The results of a questionnaire applied to 10 students are presented as well as the results of two reading activities students did.

4.1 Research Questions

RQ1. - What are the principal factors that influence in the participants' reading comprehension in the institute of Compuingles de Oriente?

RQ2. - What kind of strategies and skills did the participants use in order to comprehend the text?

4.2 Results

The first reading was used to observe the students' reading process, identify their comprehension problems, and see the level of their comprehension. While reading and after reading activities used in this reading were taken from the English book used by students. In the second reading other kinds of activities were designed in order to obtain the strategies used by students which involve predicting, reading monitoring and a strategy called *Think pair share*. The questionnaire is divided in 4 sections: first, *Reading Habits*; second, *Pre-reading*; third, *While reading*; and fourth, *after reading*.

4.2.1 Results from the First Reading

The Reading “In your face” was divided in three different sections. In the first task of this reading students had to talk about what happened to each person in the photos that appear in the reading and comment what makes people feel emotions. In this task the difficult aspect was the lack of ability to express ideas and thoughts, as the lack of vocabulary.

In the second task after reading students had to go through the article and mark if six statements were true, false or no information. The students’ answers are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1 Comprehension Activity

Students’ answers			
Statement	True	False	No Information
Paul Ekman studied People’s faces in different cultures.	8	2	
Ekman did research in several countries and got different results.	9	1	
Americans get angry more often than the fore people from New Guinea.	7	3	
Ekman thinks the emotions are the same everywhere because they are a part of our brain.	4	4	2
Two people might feel different emotions about the same thing.	4	6	
Fear is the most difficult emotion to change.	7	3	

As the table shows, the Statement 1 was not difficult for students given the fact that just 2 students failed. Statement 2 just one student failed; nevertheless, in statement 3 the majority of students failed, the same happened in statement 4 where just 2 students had correct answers. In statement 5 just four students were correct, however, in statement 6 there were more students with correct answers. According to these results the participants' reading proficiency was poor. Duke(2003) says that reading comprehension proficiency is a process to understand the message of written language and furthermore, that readers go through context; evaluate meaning and, finally arrive at a self-selected location. The results from this activity answer the first research question in which the factors that influence reading comprehension are that students did not understand the message of the reading; they did not evaluate meaning and they did not have a self-selected location.

In the third activity students had to find the meaning of an unknown word from its context. Students tried to work out the meaning of the underlined words in the reading. The results are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2 Find the meaning of an unknown word from its context.

Word	Meaning	Correct	Incorrect
Reverse	The opposite	10	
Universal	The same	10	
Deal	Take action	2	8
Trigger	Happen	4	6

Table 2 shows that vocabulary is a factor that affects the reading comprehension. According to Nagy and Scott (2000), a person should know 90%-95% word meaning in a text to be able to derive meaning from the context, even though other researchers argued that vocabulary is the strangest variable associated with comprehension. The findings of this task could show that students have reading comprehension problems because of this limited vocabulary. Students were not able to guess the meaning of new words, thus students did not understand the text quickly because difficult words usually create problems for students and these are the obstacles in reading comprehension.

4.2.2 Results from the Second Reading

The activities of this reading were designed to observe the strategies used by students. In these activities tasks from the book were not used. The first activity was focused on Predicting. In this task students tried to guess the words that would appear in the reading with just reading the title of the text. The words with more frequency are shown in table 3.

Table 3 Predicting

Word	Number of times used
Deforestation	7
Fuel	6
Temperatures	8
Climate change	10

Atmosphere	9
Pollution	10
Greenhouse	6

As table 3 shows students had a good prediction of the reading. It can be seen that students wrote words that appear in the reading. Students used their prior knowledge and the text to set up expectations the text will contain. According to Nutall (1992) one of the most important strategies students can use when approaching a new reading assignment is making predictions. The objective of this activity was a diagnosis to find out if students know about a subject before reading and the majority of students categorized and labeled the words correctly.

The second activity was based on Think-pair share that is a strategy whereby students think alone for a specified amount of time in response to a question posed by the teacher. Students then form pairs to discuss their ideas, and after this, share responses with the class. Students had to answer five different questions according to the reading with their own ideas and it was observed that students came to the reading many times to find the information required. The objective of this activity was to observe the difficulties of students when they did the task. It is important to mention that the activities from the first reading were easier than the activities from the second reading and the same problems were observed than in the first one. In this activity students had problems with the vocabulary and some questions were not correctly answered. Table 4 summarizes these results, providing the questions and the grade given to the answers.

Table 4 Proficiency of the use of the Think-Pair-Share

Question	Grade
What are the effects of global warming?	Deficient (incomplete)
How much has the earth's temperature risen?	Deficient (vague)
What kind of power plant produces the most carbon?	Deficient (mistaken)
What are the examples of sustainable energy sources?	Deficient (vague)
How does forest reduce the amount of carbon in the air?	Deficient (vague)

The students' answers were deficient, the majority of them were vague; this means that even though students had good predictions about the reading they did not have a good reading comprehension. It was observed that students did not monitor their reading and students found in the reading words they did not know and there were few of them who looked up these words in the dictionary.

4.2.3 Results from the Questionnaire

In this section the results of the questionnaire applied to 10 students will be presented. The objective of the questions was to have an idea of how much time students dedicated to the reading, and their familiarity with the reading strategies.

In this section on the questionnaire was asked to find out the reading habits students have, the kinds of text they like reading, the kind of text they would like to read in English and if students enjoy reading in a second language. Table 5 shows the students' answers from the question number 1.

Table 5 Reading Habits

Student	Student's Answers
1	Si la mayoría de los integrantes de mi familia
2	Ocasionalmente
3	Mi papa, mi hermana y yo somos los que leemos en casa
4	En ocasiones
5	Si, mis hermanos leen literatura y mis padres el periódico y yo leo libros relacionados con mi carrera
6	Sí, yo leo literatura y mi madre lee artículos y mi padre no lee más que el periódico.
7	No, sólo tengo un hermano que lee por obligación (en la escuela) y yo si leo por hábito.
8	Sólo dos personas, mi hermano y yo
9	Muy poco
10	No tenemos el hábito de lectura

As it can be seen in the table above the majority of students have reading habits and just 3 students say they do not have them. Also, tables from reading 1 and 2 show that some students had more problems than others. These readers are the ones who do not have reading habits. Some researchers regarding how reading habits affect reading comprehension argued the family environment is a valid model for developing activities to encourage reading; students may be confused when the family only encourages reading for academic purposes and as such children might associate reading with school obligations. This study found that the encouragement given to the student by the family to read is partial because about half of the respondents reported to buy and be recommended books at home, but only a third one reported that their families show interest in what they read and discuss or talk about books at home.

The second question was directed to the kind of text students usually read; the following categories were the most frequent: series, novels, articles about sciences and technology, magazines, newspapers. The third question was if students enjoy reading different kinds of texts in English. The ten students said they enjoy reading in English. The main reasons are: they learn new vocabulary, also because the readings are interesting.

In the section I the questions were focused on knowing *if students used pre-reading strategies*. The first question is related to know if students have a reading objective before they start reading. The ten students agreed that understanding the reading is their main objective, nevertheless, it was observed during the different reading activities that they started reading without defining an objective. According to Smith (2004) students must have 4 main objectives before reading: Read to activate and reinforce other skills, reading to become a better reader, reading to develop critical thinking and reading for enjoyment.

This means students do not have well defined objectives and this is a problem that affects reading comprehension.

The second question is focused on knowing if *students know what kind of information will find in the reading*. Seven students said that they know what kind of information the reading will contain because of the title and the images. The other three students said that they do not care about knowing the information before they start reading. The third question is related if *students bring to their minds all the information about the topic of the reading*. The ten students agreed that when they know the topic they bring information about it, and when it is unknown is it difficult to have information.

The fourth question was related to obtain *the way students know the content of the reading*. The ten students agreed the title is the indicator of the content of the reading. As it can be observed, question 2, 3, 4 are related to the prediction strategies. Apparently students manage correctly this strategy, this means the comprehension of a text should be easier; on the other hand it was difficult for them to have a satisfactory reading comprehension of the two readings even with a good prediction.

The fifth question is focused on knowing if *students check the text before they start reading*. Students' answers are shown in table 6.

Table 6 Before Reading Activities

Antes de leer el texto ¿chechas de que se trata?	
Student	Answer
1	A veces si o que me interesa el tema o por curiosidad
2	Si por curiosidad para saber de qué trata algunas veces
3	Solo por saber cuál es la información del tema
4	No la reviso antes de leer, por falta de interés
5	A veces cuando me llama la atención el titulo o algunas palabras
6	No reviso antes el texto, yo creo que no estoy acostumbrado a hacerlo
7	Sí, eso me ayuda a observar cual es la información general de la lectura
8	Si, reviso cuantos párrafos tiene la lectura, imágenes, el titulo
9	No lo hago porque no tengo el hábito de revisar lo que voy a leer en clase en ingles
10	Si lo reviso para ver si es interesante para mi

As we can see seven students check the text before reading. This means students use the speed technique of skimming. Students rapidly move the eyes over text with the purpose of getting only the main ideas and a general overview of the content. On the contrary there are 3 students who said that they do not check the text. Students who use skimming activate the knowledge about the topic and have an *ideal interaction* with the text.

In the section II the questions were focused on knowing the strategies students use during the reading. The first question in this section is related to know the way students control their reading comprehension while students read the text. The ten students agreed that if they do not understand the reading they come back to the paragraph and read again, also if they find words that they do not know they ask for the meaning or look them up in the

dictionary. Compared with the result from the two readings, one of the main problems was the vocabulary. It was observed students did not come back to the reading. They come back to the reading when they have to answer different questions according to the text and they realize they do not understand anything.

In the following question *in order to know the meaning of unknown words students use the context, the image, the context or the form of the word*. In the table 7 the answers of students are shown.

Table 7 Inferring

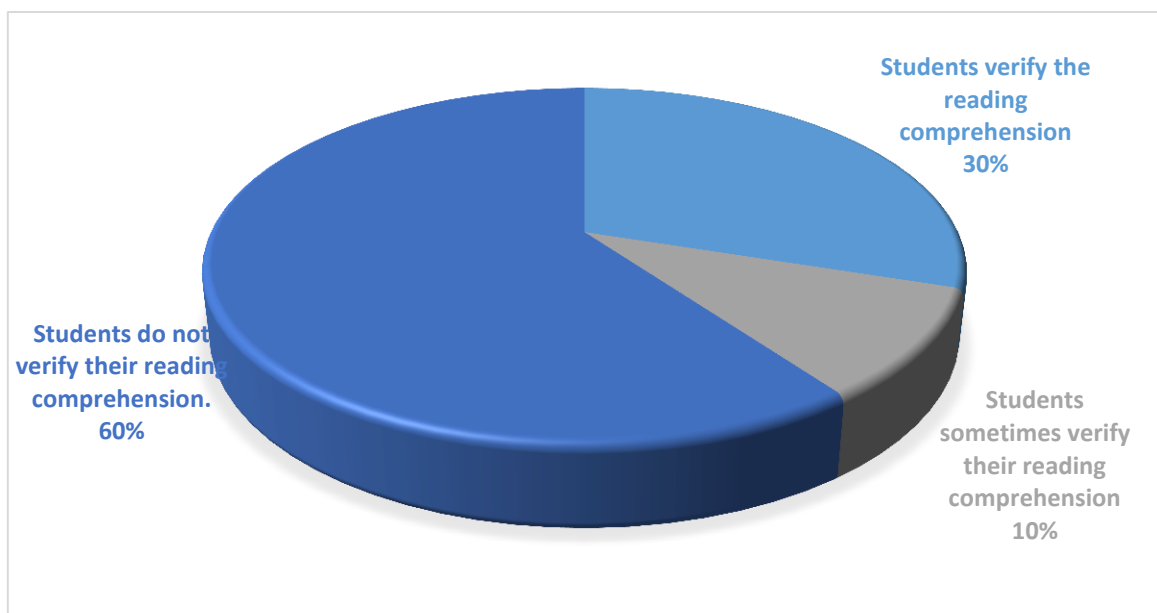
<i>Para saber el significado de algunas palabras nuevas en la lectura ¿usas el contexto, las ilustraciones, el contenido, o la forma de la palabra?</i>	
Student	Answer
1	El contexto y la forma de la palabra
2	El contenido
3	Las ilustraciones y la forma de la palabra
4	El contenido y las ilustraciones
5	El contexto y las ilustraciones
6	El contenido
7	Uso todas
8	Uso el contenido y el contexto porque algunas palabras cambian el significado dependiendo el contexto
9	Uso el contexto
10	El contenido

As it is shown the ten students agreed the context and the content are the most used elements in order to know the meaning of new words. This reading skill is called inferring.

However the students' answers can be compared with the observations of the readings. It is true students infer using the content but the majority of their guesses were not correct. Inferring was quite difficult for students, because it is necessary to understand the full content of the text, and it is something students did not achieve.

The following question is addressed to know the kind of reference material students use to know the meaning of unknown words. The 10 students agreed that they look up the meaning using the dictionary, 6 students use an application in their cell phones (dictionary). It is supposed that using a dictionary improves reading comprehension and vocabulary; however, according to the observations and results from the readings, the time students took to look up words interfered to concentrate on the text as a whole. In addition some learners located the wrong dictionary entry, leading to miscomprehension.

In section III questions were focused on knowing the strategies students used after reading. The main objective is to obtain if students had a critical reading. In this section, students did not take time to reflect upon the purpose of the reading, the tone and attitude of the author. Students argued they do not care about it even when they know it is important. At the end of the reading students did not grade their comprehension. This means students did not understand the information, ideas, and opinions stated within the text from sentence to



sentence, paragraph to paragraph. Students did not compare or contrast their objective because they did not have an objective before reading.

Graphic 1 Students verify if they achieve the reading objective

As the graphic 1 shows, only the 30% of the students verify their reading comprehension of the reading. This means that students do not use strategies after the reading in order to check their understanding, nonetheless the use of strategies after the reading enable to summarize, remember and expand the reader's knowledge.

Table 8 Reflection about the author's purpose.

1	No le doy mucha importancia aunque sí la tiene
2	Ocasionalmente me tomo el tiempo para reflexionar acerca del propósito del autor
3	No es de mi interés
4	Si reflexiono el propósito del autor ya que es importante para entender la lectura.
5	No tengo la dedicación de reflexionar acerca de lo leído
6	No me percato de eso
7	No le tomo importancia
8	A mí me gusta saber si entendí lo que quiso decir el autor.
9	No reflexiono sobre la actitud y tono del autor.
10	Considero que el propósito del autor es importante para entender la lectura por eso sí acostumbro a reflexionar acerca de eso.

As the table 8 shows, the majority of students wrote that they did not use to reflect upon the purpose, tone and attitude of the author, nevertheless it is important to understand why a

text was written because it allows to infer meaning from text based on the author's purpose to write. Identifying why an author writes a text deepens our understanding of how to read and understand a text.

4.3 Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented and described the results from the 2 reading activities and the questionnaire applied to the participants previously described in Chapter three. The results were presented in tables to facilitate the interpretation of the results. This was done to answer each of the research questions that are part and fundamental focus for this research project. In the following chapter, I will draw a general conclusion for this study, the significance it has and the limitations I had during this project and I will give some recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter a summary of the results and their main highlights are presented. In addition, the implications of the study, its main limitations and some directions for further research are also presented.

5.1 Conclusions

The purpose of this present paper was to find the reading comprehension problems students have in the Instituto de Compuingles de Oriente. In order to obtain the data two different reading activities were applied from the English reading textbook used by students. The results from the first reading showed a serious vocabulary problem, they did not understand the message of the reading and did not evaluate meaning and these are factors that create obstacles in reading comprehension. In the second reading the activities comprehension were designed to see if students used pre reading, meanwhile reading and post reading activities. The first task was predicting and according to the results students have a satisfactory predicting, nevertheless, the problem is that students do not monitor their reading comprehension. The results from the Think-pair-share activity suggest that the answers by students were deficient and vague because of their lack of reading comprehension.

The results from the questionnaire indicate that students like reading in English even though they have comprehension problems. They do not have an objective before they start reading and the majority knows the content of the reading because of the title, the majority use dictionary to know the words students do not know, nevertheless after reading students did not grade their reading comprehension, the principal reason students argued is they do

not know how to do it. Students do not have a critical reading because of the poor use of reading strategies and the lack of vocabulary.

5.2 Implications

This research pointed out the present need of improving reading comprehension due to the fact that this is an important ability in learning a FL. The analysis performed and the results suggest that lack of vocabulary, that students do not monitor their reading and, that they do not have an objective before starting reading are important factors in the level of reading comprehension. Students may increase their vocabulary and get an objective before reading with the help of the teacher. Also they should reread the paragraph in case they do not understand the message. Finally students should find the way to grade their reading comprehension. If students achieve these factors that cause obstacles in their reading comprehension they will improve their way of reading and have a critical reading.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The conclusions of this research are based on the results found in students in the Instituto de Compiungles de Oriente. However given the methodology, the sample, the instruments and procedure utilized for this research, some limitations need to be outlined. First of all a questionnaire was used in order to answer research questions. In this study a questionnaire from a similar research in the University of Chetumal (Macola,2007) was taken. However the validity and reliability estimates of the instrument as determined by the previous

research, a general limitation that only elicit opinions, perceptions, or beliefs. The results reflected what students think they do, and not exactly what they actually do. However their answers were compared with the reading activities and a clear difference was observed between what they said they do and what they did.

5.4 Directions for Further Research

The data collected in this research was analyzed focusing on a questionnaire and two reading activities. However, this data can be used for further studies on reading comprehension problems. But some deeper research needs to be done in order to use strategies to comprehend successfully a text written in English. In the meantime, it is hoped that this study will contribute to what was already known, and will provide some insights that can be useful for teachers who are interested in this field.

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APENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

BENEMERITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE MEXICO

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

El objetivo de este cuestionario es obtener información acerca de tus hábitos de lectura y la forma en que la lees. Los datos que se obtengan serán utilizados de forma confidencial y sólo para fines investigativos. Por lo cual es importante que contestes lo más honesto posible. Por tu atención gracias.

Información Persona

ID _____

Edad:

Género: Masculino Femenino

1. ¿En tu casa, tu familia tiene el hábito de lectura de libros?
2. ¿Qué tipo de libros te gustan leer?
3. ¿Disfrutas leer los diferentes tipos de lectura en tu clase de inglés?
4. ¿Qué tipo de lectura te gustaría leer más en inglés?

Sección I. Pre-lectura

1. ¿Decides con anticipación el objetivo de la lectura? En caso de hacerlo ¿Cómo lo haces? Y ¿Por qué no?
2. ¿Antes de leer ya sabes qué información vas a buscar en la lectura? ¿Por qué?
3. Antes de leer, ¿Traes a la mente toda la información sobre el tema? ¿Por qué?
4. ¿Cómo sabes cuál será el contenido del texto antes de leerlo?
5. ¿Antes de leer le das un vistazo a la lectura? ¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?

Sección II. Durante la lectura.

6. A medida que lees ¿Controlas tu comprensión de lectura? ¿Cómo lo haces? ¿Por qué no lo haces?

7. Para saber el significado de algunas palabras nuevas en la lectura, ¿usas el contexto, las ilustraciones, el contenido o la forma de palabra? ¿Cuál utilizas de estas y por qué?
8. Para saber el significado de algunas palabras en la lectura ¿Usas material de referencia (diccionarios, libros de textos, software? ¿Po qué? ¿Por qué no?

Sección III. Después de la lectura

9. ¿Tomas un tiempo para reflexionar acerca del propósito, tono y actitud del autor?
¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?
10. Después de leer, ¿Contestas si verdaderamente lograste el objetivo de la lectura?
¿Por qué? ¿Por qué no?
11. ¿Calificas tu comprensión lectora? ¿Cómo lo haces? ¿Por qué no lo haces?
12. Cuando acabas de leer, ¿Cómo constatas si verdaderamente lograste tu objetivo de la lectura?

APPENDIX B

Reading Activity 1

Why is this man so angry? We don't know the reason, but we can see the emotion in his face. Whatever culture you come from, you can understand the feeling that he is expressing.

Forty years ago, psychologist Paul Ekman of the University of California, San Francisco, became interested in how people show their feelings. He took photographs of American people expressing various emotions. Then he showed them to the Fore people from a jungle in New Guinea. Most of the Fore had never seen foreign faces, but they easily understood Americans' expressions for anger, happiness, sadness, disgust, fear, and surprise.

Ekman did the same experiment in reverse. He showed pictures of Fore faces to Americans, and the results were similar. Americans had no problem reading the emotions on the Fore people's faces. Ekman's research has powerful support to the theory that facial expressions or basic emotions are the same everywhere. He did more research in Japan, Brazil, Argentina, and got the same results. Ekman, these six emotions are universal because they are built into our brains. They developed to help us deal with things quickly that might hurt us. Some emotional triggers are universal, as well. When something suddenly comes into sight, people feel fear, because it might be dangerous. But most emotional triggers are learned. For example, two people might smell newly cut grass. One person spent wonderful summers in the country as a child, so the smell makes him happy. The other person remembers working very hard on a farm and being hungry when smell the grass.

Once we make an emotional association in our brain, it is difficult, and sometimes impossible to change it. "Emotions is the last changeable part of the brain", says Ekman. But we can learn to manage our emotions better. For instance, we can be more aware of things that make us angry, and we can think before we react.

There are many differences between cultures, in their languages and customs. But a smile is exactly the same everywhere.

Before Reading Activity

Discuss these questions with a partner.

What happened to each person in the photos?

Why do they feel like this?

What makes you feel these emotions?



Afterreading activities

Circle **T** for true or **F** for false, and **NI** for no information

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| Paul Ekman studied people's faces in different cultures. | T F NI |
| 2. Ekman did research in several countries and different results. | T F NI |
| 3. Americans get angry more often than the Fore people from New Guinea. | T F NI |
| 4. Ekman thinks emotions are the same everywhere because they are part of our brain. | T F NI |
| 5. Two people might feel different emotions about the same thing. | T F NI |
| 6. Fear is the most difficult emotions to change. | T F NI |

Communication

Think about a time when you felt one of the emotions in the reading. Tell your partner about your experience. Your partner will ask you for more details.

1. What happened?
2. How do you feel?
3. What did you do?
4. What did you learn from this experience?

Writing

Write about the experience you describe in the Communication activity. Be sure to include lots of details about the experience.

APPENDIX C

Reading Activity 2

The carbon connection

We don't agree on everything but the world does seem to agree on one thing: Global warming is happening, and it's causing big problems. And the biggest cause of global warming is carbon in the form of carbon dioxide produced by burning coal and oil.

Carbon dioxide in the atmosphere keeps heat from escaping into space. Long ago, this **greenhouse effect** was a good thing. It kept the earth from becoming too cold. But in modern times, more carbon dioxide has been entering the atmosphere, so less heat can escape. We've already raised the earth's temperature over one degree Fahrenheit, and we can see devastating effects—melting polar ice, retreating glaciers, severe weather, and changes in sea life.

The solution is to burn less, but with the earth's population growing, how can this be accomplished? The answer, according to experts, is not one amazing new technology, but rather all of the existing technologies combined.

Clean electricity Coal burning power plants produce much of the carbon that enters the atmosphere. If we use natural gas or nuclear energy in all new power plants, we will greatly reduce carbon **emissions**. Coal can also be converted to a clean burning gas before it is used to produce electricity. There is also technology that captures the carbon produced by burning coal so that it can be stored underground.

Sustainable energy. Energy for heating and electrical power can also come from **sustainable** sources. Large wind farms with dozens of wind turbines can be seen in many parts of the world. Thousands more wind turbines would decrease the world's carbon emissions, and we will never run out of wind, unlike coal or oil. Solar panels are another investment in the future, along with **bio-fuels** from corn, soybeans, sugar cane, and grasses.

Forest protection. Trees have the ability to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, but unfortunately, they're disappearing fast. Forests are logged to meet the construction industry's demands for wood, and trees are cleared to make room for farming, which only increases the amount of carbon in the air. Protecting forests, on the other hand, leads to a better environmental future.

Conservation. Using less energy to begin with may be the easiest way for most of us to decrease carbon emissions. Switching from old-fashioned incandescent light bulbs to high-efficiency fluorescent lights dramatically decreases our electrical consumption. Lifestyle changes are also important, for example, turning off computer monitors when we are not using them and riding bicycles or using public transportation. Finally, if all new buildings,

appliances, and vehicles were designed with energy efficiency in mind, we could stabilize or even decrease the amount of carbon entering the atmosphere.

Before reading activities

1. Read the title of the reading, close your book; then on the paper write 10 words you think will appear in the reading.

Activities

A. Discuss these questions with a partner.

1. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future?
2. Do you think people will solve the problem of global warming?

B. Find the information in the circle

1. What are the effects of global warming?
2. How much has the earth's temperature risen?
3. What kind of power plant produces the most carbon?
4. What are these examples of sustainable energy sources?
5. How do forests reduce the amount of carbon in the air?

C. Do the left side of the chart, write three things you will do today to help prevent future global warming

