

SKIMMING AND SCANNING STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP READING COMPREHENSION IN EFL STUDENTS

ESTRATEGIAS DE SKIMMING Y SCANNING PARA DESARROLLAR LA COMPRENSIÓN LECTORA EN ESTUDIANTES EFL

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Abstract

Reading comprehension in English as a foreign language remains a challenge for many students, despite years of study. Because teaching methods such as translation and memorization are prioritized, ignoring useful strategies such as skimming and scanning. That is why the aim was to determine the reading comprehension level achieved in EFL students by integrating skimming and scanning strategies. Therefore, a qualitative and quantitative approach was used to collect and analyses data through a pre-test, a post-test with readings of urban legends from the Pujili canton, and a grading rubric with 16 fifth-semester students from the National and Foreign Language Teaching programme at the Technical University of Cotopaxi. The study results showed that the students exhibited deficiencies at the inferential and critical levels. Furthermore, after a pedagogical intervention, their grades improved considerably, as reflected in the post-test results. The study reveals that the implementation of reading strategies contributes to reading efficiency. It is concluded that it is essential to expose these strategies to students as they can greatly help students to process and understand the content of texts, books and readings as time and accuracy are key to increase academic performance. It is recommended that teachers encourage the correct use of these strategies as they enrich and contribute to students' knowledge by provoking reading productivity.

Keywords: Reading strategies; skimming; scanning



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Resumen

La comprensión lectora en inglés como lengua extranjera sigue siendo un reto para muchos estudiantes, a pesar de años de estudio. Esto se debe a que se priorizan métodos de enseñanza como la traducción y la memorización, ignorando estrategias útiles como el skimming y el scanning. Por eso, el objetivo era determinar el nivel de comprensión lectora alcanzado por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera mediante la integración de estrategias de skimming y scanning. Para ello, se utilizó un enfoque cualitativo y cuantitativo para recopilar y analizar datos mediante una prueba previa, una prueba posterior con lecturas de las leyendas urbanas del cantón Pujilí y una rúbrica de calificación para 16 estudiantes de quinto semestre de la carrera de Pedagogía de los Idiomas Nacionales y Extranjeros en mención Inglés de la Universidad Técnica de Cotopaxi. Los resultados del estudio mostraron que los estudiantes presentaban deficiencias en los niveles inferencial y crítico. Además, tras una intervención pedagógica, sus calificaciones mejoraron considerablemente, como se refleja en los resultados de la prueba posterior. El estudio revela que la implementación de estrategias de lectura contribuye a la eficiencia lectora. Se concluye que es esencial exponer estas estrategias a los estudiantes, ya que pueden ayudar en gran medida a procesar y comprender el contenido de los textos, libros y lecturas, ya que el tiempo y la precisión son fundamentales para mejorar el rendimiento académico. Se recomienda que los profesores fomenten el uso correcto de estas estrategias, ya que enriquecen y contribuyen al conocimiento de los estudiantes al provocar la productividad lectora.

Palabras clave: Estrategias de lectura; skimming; scanning

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Introduction

Reading is one of the four fundamental skills for learning a foreign language. (Billabong High School, 2024) claims that “reading is a vital skill that benefits one’s life. The ability to read proficiently unlocks opportunities for education, employment, knowledge, creativity, and connection”. However, many EFL students struggle to understand, interpret, infer, and find specific information in English written texts. This impairs academic performance and slows the preparation process for professional life.

In this sense, some students in the fifth semester of the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages (English) at the Technical University of Cotopaxi still read slowly. Skimming and scanning strategies have proven useful tools for developing reading comprehension by enabling students to process information more efficiently. Therefore, the need arises to establish the reading levels involved in reading comprehension and to determine whether the correct application of skimming and scanning strategies will improve their rapid comprehension of texts. Gulo, (2020) in her research she concludes that speed reading strategies have some positive points such as increasing interest in learning English, easily finding the main idea in the text, making



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a prediction of the content of the text, answering specific questions, and understanding some new and difficult words. (p. 11).

This study is expected to answer the research question: How do skimming and scanning techniques influence students' reading comprehension? The research had the general objective: To determine the level of reading comprehension achieved by students of English as a foreign language (EFL) through the integration of skimming and scanning strategies.

Theoretical Framework

Reading Comprehension Advantages

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill for students learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It not only enhances language proficiency also it contributes to overall academic success. Anaktototy (2022) believes that "reading comprehension can help learners improve their English language proficiency and improve their knowledge of the information that they get from the reading text" (p.245). While developing effective reading comprehension can be challenging, the skill and knowledge acquired offset this.

Learning a language does not only involve memorizing words or grammatical rules, it also involves understanding what is read. According to Anaktototy (2022) "students who have a high reading comprehension strategy will possess a higher-level language proficiency" (p.245). Reading strategies are extremely important for the development of reading comprehension and thus for advancing students' educational progress.

Skimming

Skimming is a very effective strategy if there is a large amount of reading to be read in a short period. This strategy recognizes the most relevant ideas from the reading materials. As Fatmawan, Dewi, & Hita (2023) note that the skimming involves reading quickly to get an overview of the material. It is crucial for the reader to know how to identify the main ideas of the reading in order to better interpret the text.

In the academic environment, it is essential that students learn reading techniques such as skimming, as this allows them to quickly grasp the main ideas of a text and make better use of time when faced with large amounts of information.

In this regard, Basuki (2018) emphasizes that:

Skimming is the reading style used by flexible readers when their purpose is to quickly obtain a general idea about the reading material. The skimming style is most useful when students have to read a large amount of material in a short amount of time. When using the skimming style, students should identify the main ideas in each paragraph and ignore the details in supportive sentences (p.132).

It is necessary to analyze the benefits of these reading strategies for students to significantly contribute to improving the quality of education.

Skimming as a strategy to improve reading comprehension in EFL students

Skimming is an effective reading strategy that allows students, particularly those learning English as a foreign language (EFL), to improve their reading comprehension and efficiency.





It involves an overview of a text and involves reading proficiency. When reading, a reader needs to know every word in the text. Some words are not so important to understand that they can be skipped, sometimes they do not connect with the idea being sought (Fauzi, 2018, p.105).

Recognizing the main ideas is essential to understanding the text and gaining a general understanding.

Skimming is a valuable strategy for improving reading comprehension among EFL learners. Evidence suggests that when implemented correctly, skimming improves comprehension scores and increases reading speed and efficiency. Educators should incorporate this technique into their teaching methodologies to foster better reading habits and outcomes for EFL learners. Fauzi, (2018) defines “skimming as one of the strategies that require readers to read quickly to get an overview of a section's general idea or gist” (p.105). Skimming makes it more effective to get a general idea of the text and to understand the text better.

Effectively applying skimming strategy

Speed reading techniques involve quickly reading a text to grasp its main ideas and overall structure, with an emphasis on headings, subheadings, and key terms. Umass (2024) emphasizes that the important thing is to know which parts of a reading to read and which parts of the text to skip. This approach increases reading speed and comprehension, making it a useful skill for quickly processing large volumes of information. By practicing speed reading, students can improve their ability to identify important content and better prepare for tests and assignments.

Skimming is a speed reading technique that allows you to identify the main ideas through several key steps in the text. According to Vaia (2024), to better understand a text, it is useful to start by analysing its title, as it provides a general idea of the topic to be covered. Next, it is advisable to review the subheadings, which offer a clear structure of the content. Reading the first paragraph is often key, as it usually introduces the reader to the main idea of the text. It is also important to pay attention to keywords highlighted in bold or italics, as well as lists or bullet points that highlight relevant information. Finally, reading the final sentences can help to summarise the most important points of the text.

Scanning

The scanning strategy allows readers to improve the ability to process, analyze, and interpret written information. According to Basuki (2018), scanning is quickly searching for some particular piece of information. An example of this activity is when students look for names or dates, find definitions of a key concept, or list a certain number of supporting details. The purpose of scanning is to extract information without reading through the whole text. On the other hand, scanning is very useful for students to find specific information to get answers from the questions in the assignment or exam and minimize their time to answer the questions in the text (Zuhriyah, Agustina, and Fajarina, 2018). According to the definitions, scanning is a reading strategy used by readers when their objective is to locate specific information more quickly within reading texts.

Scanning as a strategy to improve reading comprehension in EFL students

Scanning is one of the strategies that facilitates the analysis of a text. Students can identify essential information more quickly, saving time when searching for specific content and relevant ideas in the text



(Komara & Dewi, 2021). Scanning should be taught, implemented, and practiced following a procedure based on previous research, to ensure that students are better prepared to face its application to benefit their reading comprehension. Students should be able to scan the text to locate specific fragments of information they are looking for and at the same time take advantage of this strategy that is important, fundamental, and effective for the various levels and especially for university education.

Effectively applying scanning strategy

For effective implementation, especially in educational settings, consider the following key techniques and best practices: First, skim this material to determine if it is likely to contain the facts you need. Butte College (2019) defines the following to apply the scanning strategy effectively:

- Know what you're looking for.
- Decide on a few keywords or phrases—search terms, if you will. You will be a flesh-and-blood search engine.
- Look for only one keyword at a time. If you use multiple keywords, do multiple scans.
- Let your eyes float rapidly down the page until you find the word or phrase you want.
- When your eye catches one of your keywords, read the surrounding material carefully.

These guidelines make it easier for the reader to better understand the reading.

Advantages

Skimming and scanning are effective reading techniques that enhance information processing and comprehension. Each method serves distinct purposes and offers unique advantages. For Wong (2023) the main advantage of skimming is the quick review of texts that have been studied, while through scanning it is possible to locate specific information in a text. These advantages allow students to obtain information from a long text in a short time, making reading comprehension more effective and thus improving learning in the English language.

Also (2020) thinks that "as a college student who has so many assignments, they should manage their time effectively. When they apply skimming techniques in their reading, it will spend less time than normal time that they used to read" (p.6). So, EFL students often face time limits during tests. Mastering skimming and scanning equips them with the skills needed to manage their time effectively while still achieving comprehension goals.

Steps for identifying ideas

Main idea: There are 4 steps to follow in the skimming for the main ideas as followed:

1. Find definition. They are often signaled by special types, especially italics.
2. Located enumerations. It does not help to locate a numbered series of items if you do not know what label the series fits under.
3. Look for the relationship between headings and subheadings. Such relationships are often the key paragraphs.
4. Look for emphasis words and main ideas. Look for points marked by emphasis words and main ideas in key paragraphs. (Langan, 1992, as cited in Aritonang, Lasmana & Kurnia, 2019)



Considering these steps and the general concept of the speedreading strategy, identifying the main ideas of a text can be effective if you focus on the topics and subtopics, trying to uncover the meaning of the paragraph. The typeface, size, and font can provide information that allows you to recognize the main idea without having to read in detail.

Secondary idea: Secondary ideas are the information that supports or clarifies the main idea. These ideas support the relevant information to provide additional information that aids in the comprehension of the text.

Supporting detail

Supporting details provide relevant information to clarify or support the main idea. These elements demonstrate the authenticity of the main idea, making the reading's message comprehensible.

Reading comprehension levels

Reading comprehension is fundamental because it allows them to interpret and understand what they read, facilitating learning. It also improves language and fosters creativity, concentration, and autonomy. It is key to the development of learning, as it helps to improve school performance. Fuela & Tipantasi (2021) mention that “it refers to the cognitive abilities that students acquire through a process aimed at interpreting reading in both their native language and a foreign language, supported by techniques that facilitate and strengthen their understanding” (p.36). Reading comprehension helps readers understand and comprehend the information found in the text.

Levels of reading comprehension

There are three levels of reading that allow for a broader understanding: the literal level, the inferential level, and the critical level.

- **Literal comprehension.** When someone wants to improve their reading comprehension, the first step is to start with the basics: understanding what the text says directly. Literal comprehension is precisely about that - identifying the clear and explicit information presented in the content. Tavarez & Herrera (2020) emphasizes that “Literal comprehension refers to an understanding of the straightforward meaning of the text, such as facts, vocabulary, dates, times, and locations” (p. 7). This level helps to identify and remember important information from a text focusing on what is written, without the need for interpretation, allowing the reader to be clear about the content read.
- **Inferential comprehension.** Inferential comprehension is not only based on what the text says directly, it also requires interpreting and connecting ideas to catch a deeper meaning. In the words of Fuela & Tipantasi (2021) “this level is constructed when it is understood using relationships and associations of the local or global meaning of the text”(p.44). When the student reaches this level, it means that he/she has obtained the ability to interpret and deduce information not directly expressed in the reading.
- **Critical level.** At the critical level, the reader is able to express ideas about the reading in accordance with what he or she interprets in the text. Fuela & Tipantasi (2021) point that “the reader forms their own conclusion or opinion based on their experiences, criteria, and previously acquired knowledge about any topic of interest to the reader” (p.59). A person who has a critical understanding is ideally suited to be proficient in reading. This level leads the reader to understand the information differently





since it involves questioning its veracity to compare the author's ideas with previous knowledge and form substantiated ideas.

Materials and methods

The descriptive method was used as it is the most effective for collecting information. This made it possible to verify the effectiveness of the reading strategies applied, which helped students improve their reading comprehension skills.

The design of this research is qualitative and quantitative, seeking to determine the level of reading comprehension achieved by students of English as a foreign language. This method has been used to ensure a better analysis of the study, as it facilitates the collection of written and numerical data. This will allow for a comparison of the results before and after the application of the instruments, thus fulfilling the objective.

For the study, a sample of 16 students aged between 20 and 21 years old from the fifth semester of the National and Foreign Language Teaching degree programme at the Technical University of Cotopaxi was taken. The students were selected under specific conditions. The ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity were upheld throughout the process. This allowed us to obtain important data for analysis, enabling us to obtain results that are representative of this group of students.

To ensure the validity of the instruments used, a validation process was carried out on the three instruments with the support of expert teachers in the field. The pre-test, post-test, and rubric instruments were reviewed by two experts in education and research methodology, who evaluated the clarity, consistency, and effectiveness of each indicator in relation to the study's objectives. The necessary changes were made according to the suggestions to enhance the accuracy of the instruments.

For this research, different adapted materials were selected and applied that allowed for the accurate identification of students' reading comprehension through the reading strategies of skimming and scanning.

Results and discussion

Pre-test and post-test adapted to reading levels

Pre-Test Technical University of Cotopaxi

Name: _____ Course: _____

Date: _____

The purpose of this pre-test model is to determine the reading comprehension level of fifth-semester students of the c of the pedagogical career in national and foreign languages (English). The questions of this test are designed to assess the three levels of reading comprehension:

- Literal comprehension: Understanding what the text says explicitly.
- Inferential comprehension: comprehension from clues provided by the text.
- Literal comprehension: Evaluating the text, whether its theme, character, message, etc.

Questions to evaluate literal comprehension.



APPEARANCE OF THE CHILD OF ISINCHE

About the child's origin, many residents tell it in different ways, but all agree that he came from other places until he reached his farm where there is a colonial-type chapel.

It is said that the Isinche Grande Hacienda had very valuable obraje (wool textiles) and that the wool produced by their herds was not enough for work; therefore, the indigenous people had to bring more from other distant places to meet the obraje needs. All of them herded mules for days to distant lands. On one of these trips while returning to the hacienda, almost upon reaching its destination, a mule carrying foreign wool was annoyed and did not want to get up no matter how much the muleteer insisted. Once unloaded, the animal, without any difficulty, ran after the other animals. When opening the bundle of wool, they found inside a very small image of the baby Jesus. Confused and without much concern, the boss left the doll there for the children to play with.

At night, when the boss was sleeping in his room, he had a mysterious dream in which the baby Jesus asked him to stay there and to build him a house. The boss did not pay attention to the previous dream, but this dream came night after night until he talked with his relatives and they decided to build a temple. It was built, and when it was finished, the divine image asked him to throw parties and dress him in typical costumes.

Later, they commented that they had seen the child bathing sitting on the stones of the river near the chapel, and now at the bridge of the San Juan River, it is claimed that the stone keeps his footprints; that many times, his feet were wet when they went to visit him in the morning in his glass display; that he loved to go out to the garden; that he liked the white flowers, and many times, the gardener saw him picking their petals; that at night, he goes out to check the cattle on the hacienda's moors. It is said that the baby Jesus is naughty and playful; that he is very hostile when people do not comply with the party that some devotee offered; and that over the years, the tiny child grew in size. The procession that is made in the child's festivities is written in traditions. He asks to be dressed as an Indian, a military man, a dancer, a cowboy, according to the occasion. Everyone comments something about this baby Jesus who is frequently visited on this Isinche Grande Hacienda by many people who seek to be heard by this beautiful image of the Divine Child of Isinche.

Read and answer the following:

1. How was the figure of the Child of Isinche found?

2. How do you like to dress the Niño de Isinche to pay homage to him?

-With typical costumes -With elegant costumes -With costumes from other countries

3. When the boss found the figurine of baby Jesus, how big was it?

- Big
- Small
- Broken



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4. The first time the employer found the figure, what did he do?

- a) He saw it and threw it away where he found it.
- b) He grabbed it and left it lying in a field.
- c) He left it there for the children to play with.

Questions to evaluate inferential comprehension.

TORAC RUMI OF ANGAMARCA

This legend originates from the moors near the Angamarca parish, the land of illustrious citizens who settled in this place during the time of Independence.

It is said that in the past, many years ago, to reach the lands that now constitute the heritage of the Pangua canton, one had to cross the mountain range. At the foothills of this range lies Angamarca, a beautiful parish in the Pujilí canton.

For the travelers, crossing the ridge and trespassing its boundaries was an odyssey. Those who were familiar with the area would take many days to reach their destination. There were many fierce bulls in the vicinity, and as soon as they spotted a person, they would charge and kill them. Those who were unaware of this reality ventured forth and never returned.

An unknown missionary was unaware of this situation, and his evangelizing mission led him to advance towards the ridge. From there, he thought of crossing that immense moor. Suddenly, the missionary, who was reciting the Holy Rosary, noticed that two fierce bulls were rapidly approaching him with the intention of charging. He invoked the heavens and knelt in the middle of the moor, praying to God for forgiveness of his sins and asking for His will to be done.

God heard his pleas. A thunderclap echoed through the sky, followed by a blinding lightning bolt, and in the midst of their charge, those animals turned into stone bulls and cows. Thanking the heavens, the friar continued on his path to fulfill his evangelizing task in the lands that the Creator had destined for him.

5. Look up the words listed in the alphabet soup.

-ANGAMARCA	-BULL	-CHARGE	-EVANGELIZING	-MISSIONARY	-MOOR	-STONE
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TORAC RUMI OF ANGAMARCA

U	H	S	T	O	N	E	V	G	I	N	J	T	G
E	V	A	N	G	E	L	I	Z	I	N	G	Q	E
T	B	D	S	U	G	V	K	O	L	S	Y	E	S
M	R	I	W	M	H	F	U	G	S	W	G	U	F
I	A	N	G	A	M	A	R	C	A	K	B	K	R
C	K	E	G	P	U	D	U	C	L	O	H	C	F
K	K	O	Y	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	A	R	Y
Y	D	R	I	U	Y	A	R	J	T	W	L	T	D
L	S	N	S	V	H	B	C	H	A	R	G	E	V
B	A	M	O	O	R	M	C	F	X	M	G	Z	C
X	T	T	Y	X	R	Z	O	G	J	B	B	H	J
Z	H	E	F	O	U	X	I	R	E	N	O	B	Y
J	P	B	G	M	V	E	Q	I	B	U	L	L	U
H	G	O	U	E	G	V	R	F	L	H	Y	Y	V

6. This set of words choose the corresponding synonyms:

-adventurer, task, terrain, attack, rock, chore, wilderness, assault, cliff, backpacker.

Mission:

Moor:

Charge:

Stone:

Traveler:



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7. Write the meaning of the following words:

1. Moor:
2. Charge:
3. Beg:
4. Mission:

8. Choose the analogy for the following word pairs.

SUPPLICATE: MIRACLE

- a) fight: victory
- b) study: approval
- c) implore: salvation
- d) pray: resignation

Questions to evaluate critical comprehension.

LA VALDIVIA DE “EL PALMAR”

The Valdivia is a climbing bird with a long beak, similar to the owl. Its coloration is black or dark lead. It lives in the trunks of the old trees that exist in the western sector of our canton. This bird appears rarely, and you can hear its dismal chatter that seems to say, “To the hole it goes” many times on the day of its appearance in some populated places.

There is a belief that when this bird chirps and you hear this elongated cry, some local people will die; that is to say that it is a bird of bad omen. Among the people of El Palmar when they hear this bird called Valdivia, there is much concern because they say that someone will die. In turn, if they know that someone is sick, they believe that person has already died. As well as this belief of bad omen, in many places in our canton, there are many beliefs that are part of the daily coexistence of its inhabitants.

9. With your words it creates another superstition of this belief:

THE COCHA OF THE PILLIGUILLIS

In a place near the city of Pujilí, there are lakes that are used to decompose the leaves of the cabuyos that are later extracted to extract their consistent fiber and make sacks, hygras, ropes, etc. In a neighboring place, there was a woman who led a life that strayed without thinking that the fruit of love is the greatest thing that God lavished on a human being.

This bad woman always went to the pilliguillis' hut after drinking a glass of the juice that comes from the young cabuya leaf and got inside it. The neighbors did not understand why, from time to time, she was inside the hut; among themselves, they commented that she was doing something wrong, and they quickly moved away from her.



She had come twelve times. On this last occasion, they heard pitiful cries asking for help, and they managed to see that twelve pilliguilles hanging from her breasts devoured the evil woman until leaving her without meat on her body and a nauseating odor emanating from her remains. Her twelve children had been abandoned before they were born in this cocha. Immediately, they covered this pond and sprinkled holy water, however, they comment that at night, pitiful screams are heard from where the pilliguilles' pond used to be.

10. Answer the following:

- a. Do you think the legend is logical? Yes or no and why.

- b. Do you believe in the possibility that screams can be heard at night for the reasons that the legend narrates? Yes or no and why.

Post-Test

Questions to evaluate literal comprehension

Literal comprehension: Understanding what the text says explicitly.

Read 'The Origin of Sinchahuasin' below and answer the questions

Sinchahuasín (name of the hill) is a word belonging to the Kichwa language that translating into Spanish is identified with the term 'fortress' or 'strong house'. It is believed that in this place in ancient times stood a large building that was the temple where the ancient Pugshilis (people from the town, Pujilí) performed the festivities of planting and harvesting, praising the sun god. Here, very grandiose events were commemorated. Always accompanied by the great chieftain of the region, the dancers danced for many days to the sound of the pingullo (wooden flute) and drum.

Our grandmothers told us that our ancestors were subdued by certain invading tribes killing them mercilessly. There was only silence and stillness after such a great mortality. Then, a very intense hurricane appeared and covered the fortress and the bodies of those fallen. It was such an enormous amount of earth that accumulated, forming the beautiful hill of Sinchahuasín.

Around this hill, many legends exist. It is said that in its bosom nests the "hen of the golden eggs" that from time to time, appears before some passersby. Some also say that the Sinchahuasín keeps a lot of water and that there is a subway river that within it are kept the treasures of our ancestors.

The absolute truth is that Sinchahuasín is the most beautiful hill that adorns our town. It is the reason why we easily climb it to respect the beauty of our canton with the picturesque landscapes that present its plains and hollows. It is a place of meditation and peace.



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How can we forget those carefree years of our childhood when, left to the whims of chance and the gentle caress of the wind, we ascended to the summit to engage in play with the soft sand, gather vibrant *churos* (The Spanish word for tiny snails), and celebrate life?

Sinchahuasín, many Pujilenses sing of your beauty; many visitors admire you. They come to you by those steps or by the winding road. Sinchahuasín, a witness of my years as a child, confidant of all my life, I only hope that your image will be in front of me at the hour of my death.

1. What is the meaning of the word “Sinchahuasin”?

2. Choose the antonym word of “passerby” taking into account the context in the following sentence: “It is said that in its bosom nests the “hen of the golden eggs” that from time to time, appears before some *passersby*”.

- a) Observer
- b) Spectator
- c) Driver
- d) Walker

3. What does the word “commemorated” most closely mean in the context of the following sentence?

Here, very grandiose events were “*commemorated*”.

- a) Enshrine
- b) Dovetail
- c) Criticized
- d) Celebrated

4. What feeling does the author evoke in the following fragment?

“How can we forget those carefree years of our childhood when left to the whims of chance and the gentle caress of the wind, we ascended to the summit to engage in play with the soft sand, gather vibrant *churos* (Spanish word for tiny snails), and celebrate life?”.

- a) A Melancholia
- b) B Sadness
- c) C Homesickness
- d) D Redress

Questions to evaluate inferential comprehension.

A Bad Neighbor

In Pujilí, in the years before us, there were no scientific advances. Just as in other parts of the country, we lacked electric lighting. People saw evening fall in the fields; spreading her black cloak over the grassland,



she agonized day and night; with her black veil, she covered the peasant houses, and only the whistling of the wind and the howling of the watchdogs could be heard.

A weak light from the lamp illuminated the room. The grandmothers met with their grandchildren to tell stories—some that were touching, others that caused terror and fear which made it difficult for the children to go to their beds in peace.

On one of those nights of storytelling and meditation, this story was heard:

There was an old man surrounded by his grandchildren who said, “Oh, my children! A bad neighbor has me in this state of poverty.” One of the grandchildren, intrigued, asked, “What did that woman do to you?” “Children,” replied the old man, “I am going to tell you what happened many years ago:

At that time, I was a young worker and entrepreneur. I would go to bed early, and after calling on God, I would fall asleep peacefully. One very dark night, a night with a tender moon, I went to bed earlier than usual. I went to bed and fell asleep. In the depths of my sleep, I felt that someone was walking through my room. Somewhat sleepy, I turned on the lamp and looked everywhere. Everything was in order, and soon I fell asleep again. Very soon, I felt an icy hand caress my cheeks. Startled, I woke up and observed that a woman dressed in white was at the head of my bed, and looking at me tenderly, she said, “Near here, in your land, I have hidden my wealth. It is large. I want you to take it out so that I am happy and I rest in peace.” She advised me to take two strong and trustworthy men, a black dog, cigarettes, sugarcane alcohol, a whip halter, and other essential items with me to get the treasure out, but she told me to be careful because if a woman showed up, I would lose the entire fortune, and the apparition would continue suffering. Saying this, she disappeared.

I could not sleep all night. My imagination did not rest. Thousands of thoughts crossed my mind, and I did not dare to satisfy this request. The apparition came night after night. At first, I felt afraid and it disturbed me. Then, I got used to her continuous visits, and at such insistence, I plucked up the courage and followed the apparition to the place where she indicated. It was next to a wall adjoining a neighbor. She indicated to me with her index finger and told me, “You will dig here and everything you find will be yours. Remember the precautions you must take.” Saying this, she disappeared.

I went back to bed and could not get to sleep. Dawn came, and the sun announced the arrival of the new day. I made up my mind and prepared everything I needed: a black dog, two bottles of sugarcane alcohol, and two whip halters, and I spoke to the two men I trusted, who accepted my proposal.

The rest of the day was spent making plans and dreaming of my future wealth and the well-being that awaited me until the long-awaited moment finally arrived.

When everyone was asleep, it was about ten o'clock at night. With my two friends and carrying the essentials, we went to the right place, full of courage and a lot of energy. Using sticks and shovels, the three of us dug a hole about a meter deep when unexpectedly, the sticks collided with a foreign body and produced a deafening noise. After the surprise, we realized that it was an iron trunk with rings on two sides, and we carefully cleared the dirt from the sides and hurriedly secured the ropes to the rings.

With all the necessary effort, we pulled them, and the trunk slowly rose to the surface, almost to the edge of the pit. My mind was churning, and I was saying to myself, “A little more and it will be mine.” Sweat was





pouring down my face. My body was trembling with the nervousness of becoming the richest man on earth in a few moments. There was a mixture of curiosity and anxiety because the fortune was so close at hand as we went forward to pull it out to the edge of the pit.

We were very happy when suddenly, we heard over the wall, ‘Neighbor, will you share a little with me?’ It was my neighbor who had woken up with the banging of the sticks and, overcome with curiosity, had climbed over the wall. I didn't have time to answer her because with a sordid noise, the coveted box sank back into the ground, and everything I touched with my hands disappeared down the same hole I had anxiously dug. The mysterious woman took everything because of my bad neighbor's involvement, which cast a shadow over my life and did not allow me to be the owner of that fortune.

Understand, my children, why I am telling you “Beware of a bad neighbor.”

5. Complete the following paragraph according to the read text, using the words below.

bottles of aguardiente trusted arrival dawned

I went back to bed and could not get to sleep, it _____ and the sun announced the _____ of the new day, I made up my mind and prepared everything I needed: a black dog, two _____, two halters and I spoke to the two men I _____, who accepted my proposal.

6. Explain with your own words the meaning of the expressions below according to the read text.

Somewhat sleepy -
 Plucked up the courage -
 Sticks collided with a foreign body -
 Cast a shadow over my life -

7. Organize vocabulary words and phrases from the text related to the following categories. One example has been provided for each category.

1. Tools: Shovels,
2. Feelings: Courage,
3. Material of things: Iron,

8. Explain: What is the symbolic meaning of “cast a shadow over my life” in the following sentence?

“The mysterious woman took everything because of my bad neighbor's involvement, which *cast a shadow over my life* and did not allow me to be the owner of that fortune”.

Questions to evaluate critical comprehension.

9. Based on the following paragraph, extract the main ideas and the five supporting details from the paragraph.



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Origin of the Quilotoa Lagoon

The Quilotoa Lagoon is a breathtaking natural wonder located in the western mountain range of the Ecuadorian Andes, near the parish of Zumbahua. This stunning volcanic crater lake was formed approximately 800 years ago when the Quilotoa volcano erupted and its caldera collapsed due to tectonic activity. The result is a spectacular lagoon with a greenish hue, caused by minerals dissolved in its somewhat brackish waters. Quilotoa is not only a geological marvel but also a popular tourist destination. Visitors can access it by traveling from the cities of Latacunga or Pujilí to the edge of the crater, where they are greeted with panoramic views of the majestic lagoon. A path leads down to its shores, offering opportunities for activities like hiking and kayaking. The surrounding area is also rich in cultural significance, with local communities embracing their traditions and celebrating their connection to this natural treasure. The beauty of Quilotoa Lagoon, combined with its geological history and cultural importance, makes it one of Ecuador's most remarkable attractions, inviting visitors from around the world to admire its sublimeness.

Topic	Supporting Details
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

10 Based on the following text, create a mental map summarizing and specifying the author's intention and relevant information that the author uses to achieve his goal.

The Cry of the Indian or the Chant of the Rondador

The afternoon falls slowly. The horizon announces the hour of twilight. The birds hurry to their nests. Sadness invades the region. The merciless wind blows and makes the grasslands look like a whitish wave. It is an ordinary afternoon in the Andean moors. However, this monotony is disrupted when hearing the notes of a rondador, intoning a yarabí and once again returning to the stillness.

On one of these afternoons, when the notes of the rondador were heard, this time they sounded sadder and more mournful than the previous ones. Someone, upon hearing the notes coming from the rondador, remarked, "The Indian is crying."

I asked for an explanation of the phrase expressed, and they narrated as follows: Pedro was a little shepherd boy who, having breakfast very early in the morning, went out to graze his flock. His mother, the Indian woman Manuela, used to accompany him with the cucayo to spend the whole day in the moor taking care of the sheep.

In the evening, the shepherd boy, playing and jumping with his sheep, would return to his hut where his mother was waiting for him with hot mazamorra. After putting the flock in the sheepfold, they would sit together by the stove, have a snack, and then he would fall asleep on Manuela's lap.



One afternoon, one of many, when the shepherd boy arrived at his hut, he did not find his mother. The stove was cold. Desperate, he looked for her and found her at the local healer, whom the neighbors had taken her to after she fell, gazing at the infinite. They knew that she was suffering from some illness, and they believed that only the healer could cure it. The healer applied all his wisdom and tried to determine what was wrong. However, despite all the concoctions he gave her to take, they couldn't save the Indian, and Manuela died.

The neighbors of the region buried the Indian woman. Pedro, incredulous and with much regret, went to the burial of his mother, whose only sign was a wooden cross. The shepherd boy was left alone. Grief and melancholy invaded his soul, and every afternoon, he went to the cemetery to cry disconsolately at the tomb of his beloved mother, asking her to get up and return to her hut, which was cold and abandoned. She did not hear his cry. One day, with tears, he took the rondador, sat down at the foot of the grave, brought the rondador to his lips, and played very sad notes, hoping that his mother would hear him and feel the beating of his heart, pitying that tender child without a mother and consolation.

The little shepherd made a habit of visiting Manuela's grave to play his yarabí, which every day sounded sadder than ever, until one day, he was found dead next to the grave, with the rondador on his lips, having perished from great sorrow. Since that afternoon, from time to time, this yarabí is heard, and it is said that Pedro sings to his mother with bitter tears that signify the weeping of the Indian.

Reading tests were administered using urban legends from the Pujilí canton, consisting of three parts: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and critical comprehension. These tests must be administered individually and are designed for fifth-semester students.

Reading tests consisting of three parts were administered: literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and critical comprehension. The pretest was adjusted to the students' initial reading level, and the post-test presented a higher level of difficulty for the students than the pre-test, given that the students received prior training on the topics evaluated. These tests must be administered individually and are designed for fifth-semester students.

● Rubric

This instrument was created specifically for the evaluation of the two aforementioned instruments and was adapted to the three reading levels: inferential, critical, and literal. It contains the reading levels, the parameter to be evaluated, the score for each parameter, and the percentage represented by each level. This instrument was extremely useful for an accurate and efficient evaluation, respecting the established criteria to ensure the validity of the results.

Procedure. The instruments were developed according to the needs of the 16 students. The pre-test instrument was administered in the third week of the 2025 academic cycle, the necessary adjustments were made to apply the post-test, and it was administered in the fourth week of the academic cycle. Once the results were obtained, the grading phase was carried out according to the rubric. The data collected previously through the aforementioned instruments were initially processed in Microsoft Excel to obtain statistical data represented in percentages, which were used to determine the students' reading level and verify the effectiveness of the skimming and scanning reading comprehension strategies.



* Data analysis

Table 1. Results of the literal level in the pre-test and post-test.

	Questions Pre-test/post-test	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
Pre-test	How was the figure of the Child of Isinche found?	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Post-test	What is the meaning of the word "Sinchahuasin"?	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
Pre-test	How do you like to dress the Niño de Isinche to pay homage to him?	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	1
Post-test	Choose the antonym word of "passerby" taking into account the context in the following sentence: "It is said that in its bosom nests the "hen of golden eggs" that from time to time, appears before some <i>passersby</i> "	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pre-test	When the boss found the figurine of baby Jesus, how big was it?	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1
Post-test	What does the word "commemorated" most closely mean in the context of the following sentence?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pre-test	The first time the employer found the figure, what did he do?	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1
Post-test	What feeling does the author evoke in the following fragment?	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1

A general improvement was observed in the post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores. This indicates that the students had a low level of literal comprehension, which is due to their lack of interest in reading. Before the post-test was administered, a pedagogical intervention was carried out that raised the students' reading level.

In contrast, in the study by Ramires and Fernandez (2022), students have an average level of development in literal reading comprehension, meaning they have begun to acquire reading comprehension, as the literal level



is the most basic and is related to approaching the text. The literal level is the starting point for reading comprehension. With good intervention and engaging texts, students can improve their reading level.

Table 2. Results of the inferential level in the pre-test and post-test.

	Questions Pre-test/post-test	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
Pre-test	Look up the words listed in the alphabet soup	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Post-test	Complete the following paragraph according to the read text, using the words below.	1	0,5	1	1	1	1	0,25	1	0,5	0,25	0,75	0	1	0	1	1
Pre-test	This set of words choose the corresponding synonyms:	0,4	0	0	0,8	0,6	0,8	0,8	0,8	0	0,8	0	0,6	0,8	0,6	0,4	0
Post-test	Explain with your own words the meaning of the expressions below according to the text.	1	0,75	1	1	1	0,5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pre-test	Write the meaning of the following words:	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	0,5	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
Post-test	Organize vocabulary words and phrases from the text related to the following categories	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pre-test	Choose the analogy for the following word pairs.	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
Post-test	Explain: what is the symbolic meaning of "cast a shadow over my life" in the following sentence?	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1

The Ramires and Fernandez (2022) study shows that at this level, students demonstrated a low degree of development in the inferential level. In this case, the results are not similar, as students show a slight



improvement in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores. This indicates a slight difference in grades, confirming that students show greater affinity at the inferential level. This is because students have no difficulty identifying the main and secondary ideas in the texts.

Table 3. Results of the critical level in the pre-test and post-test.

	Questions Pre-test/post-test	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16
Pre-test	With your words it creates another superstition of this belief:	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1
Post-test	Based on the following paragraph, extract the main ideas and the five supporting details that form the paragraph	1	1	1	0	1	0,5	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Pre-test	Answer the following: Do you think the legend is logical? Yes or no and why. Do you believe in the possibility that screams can be heard at night for the reasons that the legend narrates? Yes or no and why	1	1	1	1	0,5	0,5	0,75	1	0	1	0	1	1	0,5	1	1
Post-test	Based on the following text create a mental map summarizing and specifying the author's intention and relevant information that the author uses to achieve his goal	1	1	1	1	0,5	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1

In the study by Ramirez and Fernandez (2022), the students demonstrated low levels of critical reading comprehension. Compared to this study, the students similarly reflect a low level of critical comprehension. This is because, prior to the pedagogical intervention, the reader was unable to express judgements about the readings with precise reasoning. The results of the subsequent test reflect an improvement over the students' previous performance. The improvement can be attributed to the correct application of reading strategies with texts that are interesting to the students.



Table 4. General notes from students on the pre-test and post-test.

Students	Pre-test	Post-test
Student 1	7,4	10
Student 2	7	8,25
Student 3	7	8
Student 4	7,8	9
Student 5	8,1	9,5
Student 6	5,3	8
Student 7	5.55	8,25
Student 8	5,8	9
Student 9	5.5	8,5
Student 10	6,8	8,25
Student 11	6	8,75
Student 12	6,6	9
Student 13	4,8	8
Student 14	5,1	8
Student 15	8,4	10
Student 16	9	10

Table 4 shows the students' scores before and after applying the assessment tools. The results obtained are consistent with the study by Juniari et al. (2024), which mentions that the use of skimming and scanning strategies made learning more engaging and helped students improve their reading level. The results of this study show a significant improvement in student scores. With the application of the pre-test without the prior implementation of reading strategies, students demonstrated a reading deficiency compared to the post-test. The implementation of the post-test yielded favourable results. This is due to the correct application of skimming and scanning strategies. This demonstrates that speed reading and scanning strategies contribute to the development of reading comprehension.



Table 5. Assessment aspects and results of the pre-test and post-test

Levels	Indicators	Items
Literal comprehension	Recognise and recall relevant elements in reading. Significant information is found within the reading. It replicates information by using the same words used in the text using synonyms.	Pre-test: 19.78 % Post-test: 29,16 %
Inferential comprehension	Identifies the main and secondary ideas of the text and anticipates the end of the text. It draws conclusions and identifies non-explicit events in the text. Distinguishes the figurative language used by the author.	Pre-test: 24.42 % Post-test: 29,42 %
Critical comprehension	Make judgments about the veracity of the text. Compare ideas with other sources. Justify opinions on content.	Pre-test: 22,13 % Post-test: 29,16 %

The data presented is consistent with the analysis by Chávez et al. (2024), which mentions that there is a reading deficiency among students and that, in order to develop reading comprehension, students need pedagogical intervention to raise their reading level. Table 5 shows that students did not obtain good marks in the pre-test due to a lack of practice in skimming and scanning reading strategies. The percentages show that students increased their reading level despite the greater difficulty in the subsequent test and obtained good grades. This result was achieved thanks to the correct implementation of these strategies with attractive texts, which led to an increase in the students' reading comprehension level.

Table 5 shows the parameters used to review and grade each of the students' tests. It also presents the results obtained after applying the assessment instruments. These instruments were carefully designed to accurately measure knowledge of speed reading and selective reading, as well as different levels of reading comprehension. Therefore, the information contained in the table allows us to observe and compare the participants' performance before and after the intervention, giving us a clear picture of the impact of the strategies implemented on the development of reading comprehension strategies.

A pre-test was administered to assess the participants' reading comprehension level, obtaining a score of 66.33% out of 100%. These results highlighted the need to implement teaching strategies that improve reading comprehension skills. Subsequently, classes focused on teaching and practising skimming and scanning strategies were implemented with the aim of enhancing the students' reading comprehension skills. Following this intervention, a post-test was administered, which showed an improvement in performance, with an average score of 87.74%. This progress reflects the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, confirming that the use of skimming and scanning effectively contributed to boosting students' reading levels.

The students showed greater affinity at the inferential level, both in the pre-test with 24.42% and in the post-test with 29.42%. The results presented do not coincide with the research of (Chávez et al. 2024), whose study shows that students use literal comprehension more than inferential and critical comprehension. As a result, the participants needed to rely on images to understand the text and identify explicit details in the work, such as characters, time, and space. Meanwhile, the results of this study show that students are more skilled at inferential comprehension than literal and critical comprehension. Because the students had problems with





reading comprehension, the class was adapted to their needs in order to improve the reading level of fifth-semester students.

The results obtained are consistent with the study by (Fuela & Tipantasi, 2021), which shows that skimming and scanning strategies are beneficial to students as they are useful in interpreting texts, allowing them to gain a complete understanding of the document and locate specific information. This allows learning to take place independently, enabling students to select the most accessible and effective strategy, taking into account various aspects such as duration, environment and the purpose of the reading.

Discussion

The results of the instruments applied to fifth-semester students at the Technical University of Cotopaxi show a notable difference in reading comprehension levels before and after the pedagogical intervention. The students showed a low level of reading comprehension when the preliminary test was administered, so a detailed pedagogical intervention was carried out on skimming and scanning reading strategies, with the aim of facilitating the students' understanding of these concepts. Prior to the application of the assessment instruments, it was found that the students had a greater command of inferential comprehension than of literal and critical comprehension. The lessons focused on skimming and scanning reading strategies greatly boosted the students' progress in reading, which resulted in higher scores on the post-test. Despite the increased level of complexity of the questions, the students had no difficulty in taking the test and achieved good scores.

Conclusions

The characteristics of skimming and scanning strategies in EFL contexts allowed students using the skimming strategy to identify the main ideas, which enabled them to interpret the reading better. Scanning helped students find specific information without having to read the entire text. These strategies undoubtedly helped improve both reading effectiveness and reading comprehension. In terms of reading level, the pre-test results showed that students had a low reading level. A pedagogical intervention and a post-test were implemented, and the results showed that students increased their reading level, obtaining favourable results. This percentage is reflected in the correct answers despite the increased difficulty at the time of the post-test, confirming the effectiveness of the strategies implemented to improve the reading level of EFL students.

Recommendations

It is recommended that pedagogical interventions focused on developing reading strategies such as skimming and scanning be implemented systematically and continuously to significantly improve students' reading comprehension levels. Given that the pretest revealed low levels of comprehension, the detailed application of these strategies proved effective in enhancing students' ability to grasp main ideas and search for specific information in texts. Therefore, it is advisable for teachers to integrate these strategies into their reading instruction programs, accompanied by diagnostic and formative assessments that allow progress to be monitored and interventions adjusted according to students' specific needs.





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