

UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES



Universidad de El Salvador

Hacia la libertad por la cultura

GRADUATION PROJECT

**THE USEFULNESS OF READING TECHNIQUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF
READING COMPREHENSION PROFICIENCY OF STUDENTS FROM
READINGS AND CONVERSATION I COURSE AT THE DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN LANGUAGES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR DURING
THE YEAR 2015.**

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:

**LICENCIATURA EN LENGUAS MODERNAS: ESPECIALIDAD EN FRANCÉS E
INGLÉS**

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ABSTRACT

Over the last decades, English has become widely regarded as a global language, as David Crystal has commented, “one in four of the world’s population is now capable of communicating to a useful level in English” (Crystal, 1997, p69). In fact, based on native speakers, it is considered the third most spoken language in the world according to the latest editions of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica yearbook*, and *Ethnologue: languages of the world (2014)*. But it remains in the first place as the most learned language with 1,500 million English learners.

Due to this importance of English in our globalized world, the University of El Salvador created the Department of Foreign Languages in 1956 including the English Teaching Language major in 1977 (Modified in 1999) and the Modern Languages major in 2002¹. One of the main purposes of the students for these majors is to have a complete knowledge of the four language skills, which are the following: listening, speaking, writing and reading².

The present work will be focused on the last skill mentioned and its development on reading comprehension by using the basic reading techniques learned during the Readings and Conversation I course. It is important to remark that even though reading is simply defined as the act of reading³. Reading comprehension is a complex process. The process through which the interaction of the reader’s background knowledge, the information inferred by the written language, and the reading situation context is constructing meaning from text (Dutcher, 1990).

¹ Department of Foreign Languages (2015) <http://idiomas.ues.edu.sv/index.php/quienes-somos>

² Oxford, Rebecca. (2001). *Integrated Skills in the ESL/EFL, Classroom*. ERIC Digest ED456670. Washington, DC.

³ Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2015): <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reading>



INTRODUCTION

For the past decades, it has been demonstrated that the majority of Salvadorans have not developed the habit of reading. Students from the Department of Foreign Languages throughout the entire duration of their studies are faced with the great necessity not only to a read text on different subjects but also to comprehend the different types of readings. Because of that, it is needed to explore the different strategies that students can use in order to enhance their reading comprehension proficiency. Therefore, this research was focused on the usefulness of reading techniques that students can implement to improve their reading comprehension.

The elements that take place in this project are as follow:

Chapter I: Firstly, as a research work there is a delimitation of the topic and the objectives that were the guide to develop this study; general and specific objectives are aimed to study the usefulness of reading techniques in the development of reading comprehension proficiency of students from Readings and Conversation I course. Secondly, the rationale is presented to describe the importance of this study since the purpose of the research was to know if the reading techniques play an important role to acquire a better comprehension in the different types of readings that students from the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador implement.

Chapter II: The theoretical framework is developed to provide deep information about previous literature, the different reading techniques, and theories that are based on the development of reading as an important language skill.



Chapter III: It has the methodology applied and all the steps followed for developing a mixed research in order to get the accurate data for answering the research questions. Moreover, there is a description of every single step that researchers followed to gather, process, and analyze data; probabilistic sampling is used in this project, taking as the sample 159 students from Readings and Conversation I.

Chapter IV: There is a presentation of the elaboration of the instrument and the results by means of graphics and analysis of a reading comprehension test that was administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the beginning and at the end of the second semester 2015.

Chapter V: It includes the main findings of this research. Furthermore, the research questions are answered and there are presented the proper conclusions and limitations of the research.

Chapter VI: It comprises the recommendations for students, teachers, and authorities, with the objective of contributing to the improvement of the reading comprehension of the students from Readings and Conversation I course and for the students from the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador in general. In addition, there are listed the annexes and some references that helped to make a useful and worthy research study.



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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A. RESEARCH TOPIC

“The usefulness of reading techniques in the development of reading comprehension proficiency of students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015”.

B. OBJECTIVES

a) General objective

To analyze the improvement in reading comprehension proficiency developed by the knowledge and implementation of the reading techniques studied on Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015.

b) Specific objectives

- To determine through an advanced reading comprehension test the reading comprehension degree that the students from Readings and Conversation I course have at the beginning of the semester.



- To compare the reading comprehension degree that the students from Readings and Conversation I course have at the end of the semester. In order to know and analyze if the degree of reading comprehension has increased with the knowledge of reading techniques.
- To categorize the different reading techniques and evaluate the impact that these techniques have on the students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015.
- To know and compare through a questionnaire administered to students participating in the sample which reading techniques are being used the most and define if these techniques are being helpful or not to comprehend a reading better.



C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a) General Research Question

Is there an improvement in reading comprehension proficiency developed by the knowledge and implementation of the reading techniques studied on Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015?

b) Subsidiary Research Questions

- What is the reading comprehension degree that the students from Readings and Conversation I course have at the beginning of the semester?
- What is the reading comprehension degree that the students from Readings and Conversation I course have at the end of the semester?
- Does the level of reading comprehension increase with the knowledge of the reading techniques?
- Which reading techniques are being used the most by the students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador?
- Are the reading techniques helpful for the reading comprehension?



D. RATIONALE

There is more than ample evidence to suggest that, although the four basic skills of communicative ability to speak a foreign language are highly related, they are nonetheless different but complementary. Both speaking and writing are productive skills, meanwhile listening and reading are receptive skills⁴. As a result, these skills are related each other, either receiving or producing messages.

The majority of teachers try to use all four skill areas into their lesson plan, though some classes may focus more on one set of skills. Most of the time, productive skills become more important leaving the receptive ones off. Due to this observation, the purpose of this study is to determine the usefulness of reading techniques in the development of reading comprehension proficiency of students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015.

⁴SIL International. (1999). The Four basic language skills.
<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/OtherResources/GudlnsFrALnggAndCltrLrnngPrgm/FourBasicLanguageSkills.htm>



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. RECEPTIVE VS PRODUCTIVE SKILLS

Communication skills comprise receptive skills and productive skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills while speaking and writing are productive skills. Receptive skills are these in which students receive and process the information but do not need to produce a language to do this, while productive skills require the production, for instance a speech (Harmer, 2007: 246).

The main reason for isolating these skills and discussing them separately is to highlight their importance and to emphasize the necessity for teaching these skills in a balanced way.

Krashen (1982) proposed that in language teaching, more effort should be devoted to developing learners' receptive competence than their productive competence. He claimed that learners' productive ability will arise naturally from receptive knowledge. In particular, Krashen stressed that meaningful comprehension rather than focused production is all that is needed to facilitate language learning⁵.

⁵Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.



However, this is not always confirmed in the experience of learners, who often find that their productive skills are well below the level they would like them to be, despite reasonably good comprehension skills. Learners may be unable to apply their language knowledge in actual use; hence their linguistic knowledge at the cognitive level is not utilized during the performance. As Fan Yi (2007) points out, a consequence is that learners' feelings of anxiety or frustration may increase. They may eventually lose confidence and determination, and their motivation to continue learning English may be affected⁶.

Recent theories of second-language acquisition, however, no longer assume that productive skills will arise naturally from comprehension skills. Two other factors are necessary if we are to reduce the gap between receptive and productive competence: noticing (the noticing hypothesis) and focused output (the output hypothesis).

1.1 Productive Skills

When learning a foreign language, students are exposed to both categories of language skill. As mentioned before, productive skills, also called active skills, meaning the transmission of information that a language user produces in either spoken or written form. Productive skills would not exist without the support of receptive ones. Passive knowledge, such as listening and reading, symbolizes a springboard to active implementation of grammar structures, passive vocabulary lists, heard and repeated sounds of a foreign language.

⁶ Yi, F. *Plateau of EFL Learning: A Psycholinguistic and Pedagogical Study*. Available online at wlkc.nbu.edu.cn/jpkc_nbu/daxueyingyu/download/014.pdf. (2007).



This theoretical background applies to any studied language. This should also prove that both types of skills are inseparable and one cannot exist without the other. When learning a foreign language, receptive skills usually come first and should be followed by practical application of productive ones. If a learning process lacks one of them, the final outcome will not be complete.

As most active users of any foreign language know, speaking and writing are in a reciprocal relationship. Undoubtedly, grammatical structures, words and their proper use, and a certain extent of accuracy need to be respected. These are implemented in both types of active skills. As Riggenbach and Lazaraton point out, rather than implementing activities that concentrate attention strictly to accuracy, plenty of language instructors focus on promoting communicative competence in language students by applying “communicative activities” (Riggenbach & Lazaraton, 1991, p.125). The classroom environment and atmosphere are a necessary part of successful teaching and learning. These are highly valued by the learners. Creative teachers, who do not want to let their learners get bored, work with a wide scope of speaking and writing activities.

For the teaching purpose, not only lesson plan but also a term syllabus needs to be created beforehand. More experienced language instructors bear in mind that students’ responses to needs analysis forms bring valuable pieces of information for setting up the core of the language course plan. The content of such a plan should include some general activities, but there also should be a set of tailor-made exercises that suit the specific group of learners and where particular objectives are set.



As Olshtain and Cohen state (Olshtain & Cohen, 1991, p.154), “if we wish to master another language we need to become more communicatively competent”. Their observation proves the idea that language accuracy is necessary but not the most vital feature of speaking activities.

To organize the lesson effectively a wide range of diverse activities should be involved in the lesson plan. Examples of speaking activities, some grammatical structures and vocabulary are incorporated in order to suit the content to a less homogeneous group of course participants and guide them towards the same or similar outcome.

The nature of communication⁷:

When speakers or writers use the language for communication, they are doing so because they want to say something. In the same way, when listeners or readers try to understand what speakers or writers say or write, they are interested in the communicative purpose of what is being said.

Communicative activities are characterized by:

- ✓ A desire to communicate
- ✓ A communicative purpose
- ✓ Priority of content, not form
- ✓ Variety of language
- ✓ Little teacher intervention
- ✓ No materials control

⁷ Harmer, Jeremy. “The Practice of English Language Teaching: New Edition.” 1991. London: Longman Publishing. (Pages 46-50).



1.2 Receptive Skills

Receptive skills are the ways in which people extract meaning from the discourse they see or hear but there are also significant differences between reading and listening processes and in the ways these skills are taught in the classroom.

1.2.1 *How do we read and listen?*

What a reader will bring to understand a piece of discourse is much more than just knowing the language. In order to make sense of any text, we need to have “pre-existent knowledge of the world” (Cook 1989: 69). Such knowledge is often referred as a schema. Each of us carries in our heads mental representations of typical situations that we come across. When we are stimulated by particular words, discourse patterns, or contexts, such schematic knowledge is activated and we are able to recognize what we see or hear because it fits into patterns that we already know. As Chris Tribble points out, we recognize a letter of rejection or a letter offering a job within the first couple of lines (Tribble 1997: 35).

1.2.2 *Different sub- skills of listening and reading:*

The processes when reading a novel or listening to a poem is likely to be different from those used when looking for someone's number in a telephone directory, or when listening to a spoken “alert” message on a computer. The use of these different skills will frequently depend on what is reading or listen for.



Identifying the topic: Good readers and listeners are able to select the topic of a written or spoken text very quickly. With the help of their own schema, they quickly get an idea of what is being talked about. This ability allows them to process the text more effectively as it progresses.

Predicting and guessing: Both readers and listeners sometimes guess in order to try and understand what is being written or talked about, especially if they have first identified the topic. Sometimes they look forward, trying to predict what is coming; sometimes they make assumptions or guess the content from their initial glance or half-hearing as they try and apply their schema to what is in front of them.

Reading and listening for general understanding: Good readers and listeners are able to take in a stream of discourse and understand the gist of it without worrying too much about the details. Reading and listening for such “general” comprehension means not stopping for every word, not analyzing everything that the writer or speaker includes in the text. A term commonly used in discussions about reading is skimming.

Reading and listening for specific information: In contrast to reading and listening for gist, students frequently go to written and spoken text because they want specific details. Students may quickly look through a film review to find the name of the director or the star. In this case, they almost ignore all the other information until they come to the specific item they are looking for. In discussions about reading, this skill is frequently referred to as scanning.



Reading and listening for detailed information: Sometimes students read and listen in order to understand everything we are reading in detail. This is usually the case with written instructions or directions, or with the description of scientific procedures; it happens when someone gives their address and telephone number and people write down all the details.

Interpreting text: Readers and listeners are able to see beyond the literal meaning of words in a passage, using a variety of clues to understand what the writer or speaker is implying or suggesting.

1.2.3 Processes Involved in Listening:

Hearing vs. listening

Ears are constantly being barraged by sound. However, students do not pay attention to everything they hear. They only begin to 'listen' when paying attention to the sounds and making efforts to interpret them.

Top-down processing

When a listener hears something, this may remind him of something in his previous knowledge, and this in turns, leads him to predict the kind of information he is likely to hear. When this happens, he is said to be using 'top-down' processing. When a listener can relate what he is about to hear he already knows, this will help him understand what he hears well. This is why pre-listening activities are introduced to help students see how the listening text relates to what they already know.



Bottom-up processing

If what the listener hears does not trigger anything in the previous knowledge, then he would resort to what is called “bottom up” listening, the slow building up of meaning block by block through understanding all the linguistic data he hears. This kind of processing is a much harder way to solve this problem, however, is not to focus the student's attention on the “building blocks”: pronunciation, word knowledge, etc. People listen to words and sounds but also they listen to the meaning. Teachers should advise students to listen for meaning: to use whatever clues they can get from the context who is speaking, on what topic, for what purpose, to whom, where, etc.-to make sense of what they hear. They should, for example, try to guess the meaning of unknown or partially heard words from the context. They should be taught to have a whole-to-part focus in their listening. They should work at understanding the whole message and to use grammar, vocabulary and sounds only as aids in doing this and not as important in themselves.

Listening is an active process

When a proficient listener listens, he does not passively receive what the speaker says. He actively constructs meaning. He identifies main points and supporting details; he distinguishes fact from opinion. He guesses the meaning of unfamiliar words. These are cognitive aspects of listening. The listener agrees or disagrees with a speaker. Likes or dislikes the speaker's tone of voice or choice of words. He may find the speaker's choice of topic morally objectionable or absolutely boring. He may be disappointed with/surprised by/worried about satisfied with the speaker's treatment of the topic and so on. Listeners' attitudes, values, and interests all affect the way they interpret and respond.



2. READING TECHNIQUES

Reading plays a crucial role in all fields of studies because learners can acquire a superior level of knowledge through reading activities (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983). However, reading is not the only key to success, in order to improve student's reading comprehension; there is a variety of reading techniques that can be used to achieve maximum effectiveness.

2.1 Most Common Reading Techniques:

2.1.1 *Skimming*

Skimming refers to the process of reading only main ideas within a passage to get an overall impression of the content of a reading selection⁸.

It is a strategy that can be taught to students to help them identify the main ideas in the text. Skimming is used to quickly gather the most important information, not essentially understanding each word.

Skimming is useful in three different situations:

Pre-reading Skimming: It is more than simple previewing and can give a more accurate picture of text to be read later.

Reviewing-Skimming: It is useful for reviewing text already read.

⁸ Online article: Skimming and Scanning
<https://www.aacc.edu/tutoring/file/skimming.pdf>



Reading-Skimming: It is most often used for quickly reading material that, for any number of reasons, does not need more detailed attention.

When skimming the reader dips into the text looking for:

- a. Clue words that answer who, what, when, why, how
- b. Proper nouns
- c. Unusual words, especially if capitalized
- d. Enumerations
- e. Qualifying adjectives (best, worst, most, etc.)
- f. Typographical cues--italics, boldface, underlining, asterisks, etc.

2.1.2 Scanning

Scanning is reading a text quickly in order to find specific information, e.g. figures or names⁹. It is a method of selective reading when searching for a particular fact or answer to a question. This allows searching for keywords, concepts, and ideas.

Scanning is used often with technical, scientific or professional materials to locate specific information. It is a valuable skill for second language learners to develop because often they do not require a detailed read of a text. There are many everyday uses for scanning, relevant to a purpose, such as reading a schedule.

Scanning is very useful for finding a specific name, date, statistic, or fact without reading the entire article.

⁹ Online article: Scanning
<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/scanning>



Steps in scanning an article:

1. State specific information.
2. Anticipate in what form the information is likely to appear, numbers, proper nouns, etc.
3. Analyze the organization of the content before starting to scan.
4. Use headings and any other aids that will help to identify sections that might contain the information needed.

2.1.3 Decoding

Decoding is one of the most important foundational reading strategies. If students are unable to decode words, they cannot apply other reading strategies or comprehend what they read. Teaching students proved decoding strategies provides them with a strong foundation to ensure reading success.

Decoding is the process of translating print into speech by rapidly matching a letter or combination of letters (graphemes) to their sounds (phonemes) and recognizing the patterns that make syllables and words. It is important because it is the foundation on which all other reading instruction builds. If students cannot decode words their reading will lack fluency, their vocabulary will be limited and their reading comprehension will suffer.



2.1.4 Intensive Reading

Brown (1994) explains that intensive reading “calls attention to grammatical forms, discourse markers, and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships”. He draws an analogy to intensive reading as a “zoom lens” strategy.

Long and Richards (1987) defined it as a “detailed in-class” analysis, led by the teacher, of vocabulary and grammar points, in a short passage. Intensive Reading sometimes called “Narrow Reading”, may involve students reading selections by the same author or several texts about the same topic. When this occurs, content and grammatical structures repeat themselves and students get many opportunities to understand the meanings of the text. The success of “Narrow Reading” on improving reading comprehension is based on the premise that the more familiar the reader is with the text, either due to the subject matter or having read other works by the same author, the more comprehension is promoted.



Intensive reading involves the following process:

Overview: There are two methods to obtain an overview, surveying or skimming. Both are concerned with reading only the more important parts. Get the general theme and main ideas from the important topics, questions discussed and the major conclusions.

Summarize: An important part of summarizing is organizing the ideas and supporting points. This organizing should begin in the reading but should be finalized and expressed in notes.

Purpose: Set what information is needed.

Test: Use the information to think about it or to write a report.

Questions: Basic interrogatives or who, what, when, why, and how, frequently supply aid in suggesting important concepts in almost all reading selections.

Understanding: Survey and skim the sections that are hard to understand. Re-read when there are no review notes, and when is needed to remember information that has to be recalled.

Reading: Read carefully and thoughtfully.

When is it used?

When the objective of reading is to achieve full understanding of:

- Logical argument
- Rhetorical pattern of text
- Emotional, symbolic or social attitudes and purposes of the author
- Linguistic means to an end
- For study of content material that are difficult



2.1.5 Extensive Reading

Brown (1994) explains that extensive reading is carried out "to achieve a general understanding of a text." While Long and Richards (1971, p.216) identify extensive reading as "occurring when students read large amounts of high-interest material, usually out of class, concentrating on meaning, "reading for gist" and skipping unknown words."

The aims of extensive reading are to build reader confidence and enjoyment. Extensive reading is always done for the comprehension of main ideas, not for specific details.

As in all discussions of literacy, mention is often made of the importance of extensive or free voluntary reading in second and foreign language teaching. This method focuses on teaching readers rather than on teaching texts (Haas and Flower 1988, 169). Since we learn to read by actually reading, the aim of these methods is to build learners' reading skill by encouraging them to read more. This is a supplement to intensive reading methods, in which the learners work with activities related to set texts. Textbooks are a good example of intensive reading, providing short texts and supplementary activities which allow learners to practice vocabulary and grammatical structures, develop various language skills and check their reading comprehension. Thus, intensive reading tends to focus on details and to serve functions that reach far beyond the apparent purpose of reading.



Extensive Reading Characteristics:

Day and Bamford (1980) put forward ten characteristics identified in successful Extensive Reading Programs. They are duplicated (in abbreviated form) below:

- Students read as much as possible.
- A variety of materials on a range of topics is available.
- Students select what they want to read.
- The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
- Reading is its own reward.
- Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students in terms of vocabulary and grammar.
- Reading is individual and silent.
- Reading speed is usually faster than slower.
- Teachers orient students to the goals of the program.
- The teacher is a role model of a reader for the students



2.1.6 In-depth reading

This is the most essential of all reading skills. It involves reading a text thoroughly in order to comprehend the ideas and arguments it contains¹⁰. In-depth reading is consequently much slower than skim reading.

In-depth reading is used to:

- ✓ Gain deeper meaning and comprehension of a text
- ✓ Research detailed information for an assignment
- ✓ Read difficult sections of a text

3. Input and output theory

The Input Hypothesis claims that language input (listening comprehension and reading) is important in the language program and that fluency in speaking or writing in a second language will naturally happen after learners have built up sufficient competence through comprehending input while the Output Hypothesis proposed by Swain (1985)¹¹ argued that language output (speaking and writing) may trigger the learners to pay attention to the target linguistic form in order to express their intended meaning.

¹⁰Online article: <http://hedc.otago.ac.nz/hedc/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Effective-reading-strategies.pdf>

¹¹Swain, M. (1985). Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development in Gass, S. and Madden, C. (eds.), Input in second language acquisition (pp. 235-256).



3.1 Input Hypothesis review

Acquiring language is said to be a subconscious process. It is the act of internalizing language to which you have been exposed without the deliberate memorization of a word and its definition. With the acquisition, a student does not need to be aware of the learning process, but it helps to be able to notice the unknown word in the first place.

Learning is a conscious activity. It is what we do when we look a word up in the dictionary. It is also what happens when we learn rules about how language works or purposefully study lists of vocabulary and grammar forms.

The Input Hypothesis addresses the question of how we acquire language. This hypothesis states that we acquire (not learn) a language by understanding input that is a little beyond our current level of acquired competence (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 32). This has been recently expressed lucidly by Krashen (2003a: 4): *we acquire language in only one way: when we understand messages; that is when we obtain “comprehensible input”*. This strong claim is repeated in other places where Krashen states that “comprehending messages is the only way language is acquired” and that “there is no individual variation in the fundamental process of language acquisition” (Krashen 2003a: 4).

For this reason, Krashen often uses the term ‘comprehension hypothesis’ (2003a) to refer to the Input Hypothesis, arguing that ‘comprehension’ is a better description as mere input is not enough; it must be understood. Krashen also acknowledges that this idea is not new with him.



In the field of second-language acquisition, James Asher, Harris Winitz, and Robins Burling proposed similar ideas years before, and in the field of literacy, Frank Smith and Kenneth Goodman had proposed that we learn to read by reading, by understanding the message on the page. (Krashen 2003a: 4)

Consistent with the hypothesis is then the claim that listening comprehension and reading are of primary importance and that the ability to speak or write fluently in a second language will come on its own with time. Speaking fluency is thus not “taught” directly; rather, speaking ability “emerges” after the acquirer has built up competence through comprehending input. (Krashen & Terrell 1983: 32).

The input hypothesis builds on the natural order hypothesis and answers the question of how we move from one stage of acquisition to another. In other words, it is concerned with how we move from i , where i is the acquirer’s current level of competence, to $i+1$, where $i+1$ is the stage immediately following i along the natural order. The answer to how we can understand a language that contains structures we have not yet acquired is ‘through context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic information’ (Krashen 1982: 21).

We acquire, in other words, only when we understand a language that contains structure that is “a little beyond” where we are now. How is this possible? How can we understand a language that contains structures that we have not yet acquired? The answer to this apparent paradox is that we use more than our linguistic competence to help us understand. We also use context, our knowledge of the world, our extra-linguistic information to help us understand language directed at us.



The input hypothesis runs counter to our usual pedagogical approach in second and foreign language teaching. As Hatch (1978a) has pointed out, our assumption has been that we first learn structures, and then practice using them in communication, and this is how fluency develops. The input hypothesis says the opposite. It says we acquire by "going for meaning" first, and as a result, we acquire structure.

We may thus state parts (1) and (2) of the input hypothesis as follows:

- (1) The input hypothesis relates to the acquisition, not the learning.
- (2) We acquire by understanding the language that contains structure beyond our current level of competence ($i + 1$). This is done with the help of context or extra-linguistic information.



3.2 Output Hypothesis review

The Output Hypothesis was based on the idea that output “generates a highly specific input that our cognitive system needs to build up a coherent set of knowledge” (De Bot, 1996, p. 529).

The comprehensible output (CO) hypothesis states that we acquire language when we attempt to transmit a message but fail and have to try again. Eventually, we arrive at the correct form of our utterance, our conversational partner finally understands, and we acquire the new form we have produced.

The originator of the comprehensible output hypothesis, Merrill Swain (Swain, 1985), does not claim that CO is responsible for all or even most of our language competence. Rather, the claim is that "sometimes, under some conditions, output facilitates second language learning in ways that are different, or enhance, those of input" (Swain and Lapkin, 1995, p. 371). A look at the data, however, shows that even this weak claim is hard to support.



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

TYPE OF STUDY

In general terms, a correlational study is a quantitative method of research in which two or more variables from the same group of subjects are analyzed. The objective is to determine if there is a relationship or covariation between the two variables which means a similarity between them, not a difference.

This research has been carried out as a correlational study since its main purpose was to find out the connection between two different variables, the usage of reading techniques and reading comprehension in the students of the Readings and Conversation I course.

The independent variable of the study is “usefulness of reading techniques” and it affects positively the dependent variable that is “reading comprehension in the students of the Readings and Conversation I course”. (This is detailed on the Data Collection Chapter)

RESEARCH APPROACH

The research approach in this work is a mixed approach since it is a combination of the qualitative and the quantitative method. Data was gathered through a reading comprehension test made at the beginning and at the end of the Readings and Conversation



I course. The results obtained by the students helped the researchers to analyze and describe how the dependent and independent variables were associated one to another.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Non-experimental

A non-experimental research is a study that lacks the manipulation of an independent variable but instead, relies on interpretation, observation or interactions to come to a conclusion.

In this study, reading comprehension was evaluated on the students of Readings and Conversation I course at the beginning of the second semester of 2015 when they had not studied yet the reading techniques that are taught during the course. This was evaluated through a reading comprehension test.

At the end of the second semester of 2015, the same test was administered to students of Readings and Conversation I course, at this time, students had knowledge about the basic reading techniques that can be applied when reading.

In this context, the non-experimental research explains what occurs naturally when learning the reading techniques and studies how variables are related to each other.



POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The population taken into consideration as the source of data in this research included all the students of Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the second semester 2015. The total of students in the courses was 270, who were distributed in 8 different groups at different schedules.

In order to get the sample for the tests, it was used the probabilistic sampling. Following a random process, with this kind of sampling, any member of the universe has the chance to be chosen. To do this, it was used the following statistics formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{(N-1)E^2 + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Development:

N= 270

n= Sample size

Z= 1.96

N= Total population

p= 0.5

Z= Reliability degree

q= 0.5

p and q= probabilities

E= 0.05

E= Margin of error



Numerator of the formula: $Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N$

$$n = (1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 270$$

$$n = 3.8416 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5 = 0.9604$$

$$n = 0.9604 \cdot 270 = 259.31$$

Denominator of the formula: $(N-1) E^2 + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q$

$$n = (N-1) = 270-1 = 269$$

$$n = 269 \cdot E^2 = 269 \cdot 0.0025 = 0.6725$$

$$n = 0.6725 + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q = 0.6725 + 0.9604 = 1.6329$$

Final procedure:

$$n = \frac{259.31}{1.6329}$$

$$n = 158.80$$

Total sample $n = 159$



CHAPTER IV

DATA GATHERING

ELABORATION OF THE INSTRUMENT

With the objective of analyzing the improvement of reading comprehension of students of Readings and Conversation I, two reading comprehension test taken from The *TOEFL Junior* Standard test practice material were the instruments required. The first evaluation was done at the beginning of the second semester of 2015 for students of Readings and Conversation I when they had not studied yet the reading techniques that are taught during the course. This contained two readings, the first one with 11 questions and the second one with 8 questions.

The second evaluation for the students of Readings and Conversation I course was done at the end of the second semester of 2015 when they had already learned and practiced the different reading techniques studied during the course, it contained the same test that students did at the beginning but included a questionnaire about the readings techniques they used and the knowledge they have about these techniques.



DATA CODIFICATION

After gathering the data, the results from the first tests were compared and analyzed with the results of the second reading comprehension tests.

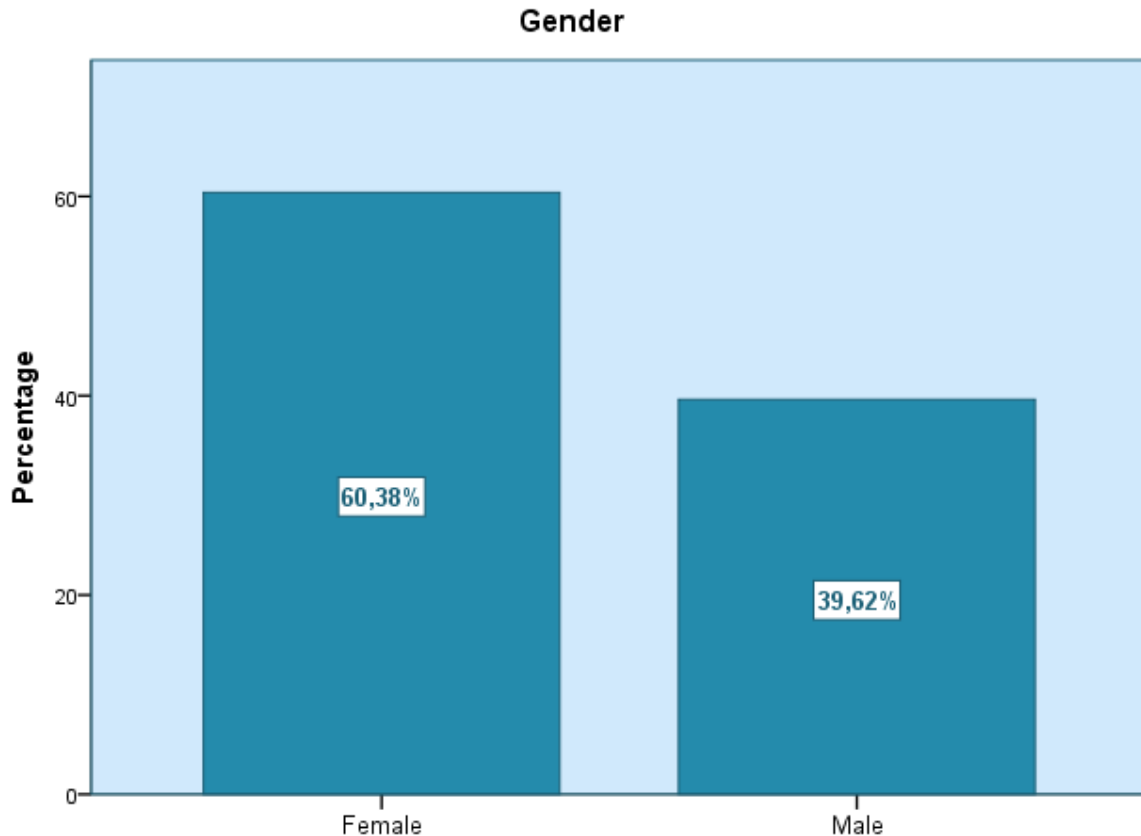
In order to carry out the statistical procedure, it was used “SPSS” which is a computer software used for survey authoring and deployment (IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). A file was created with the codes. Then, a physic codification was made and finally, the data was saved in a permanent file.

The results for each answer on the second reading comprehension test were presented graphically using an in-depth univariate analysis and it was analyzed the possible reasons why students failed in each question of the test considering that each student by the end of the semester should have acquired the knowledge understanding and hands on of the reading techniques.



GENERAL ANALYSIS, LEARNING CURVE AND MOST USED TECHNIQUES

GRAPHIC 1

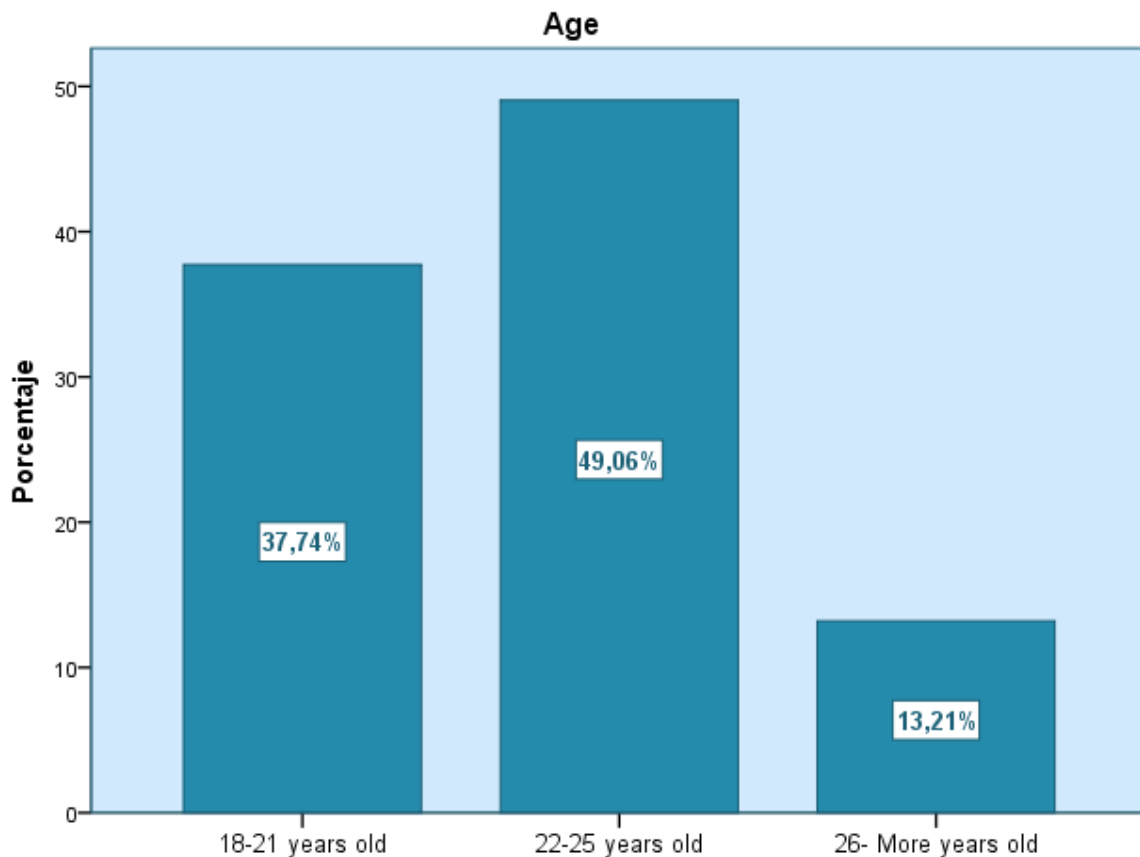


Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

Among the total of 159 tests administered to the groups of Readings and Conversation I, we have encountered that the average population for this subject is mostly female students with a 60.38% of the total population. Males are represented with a 39.62% of the total population.



GRAPHIC 2



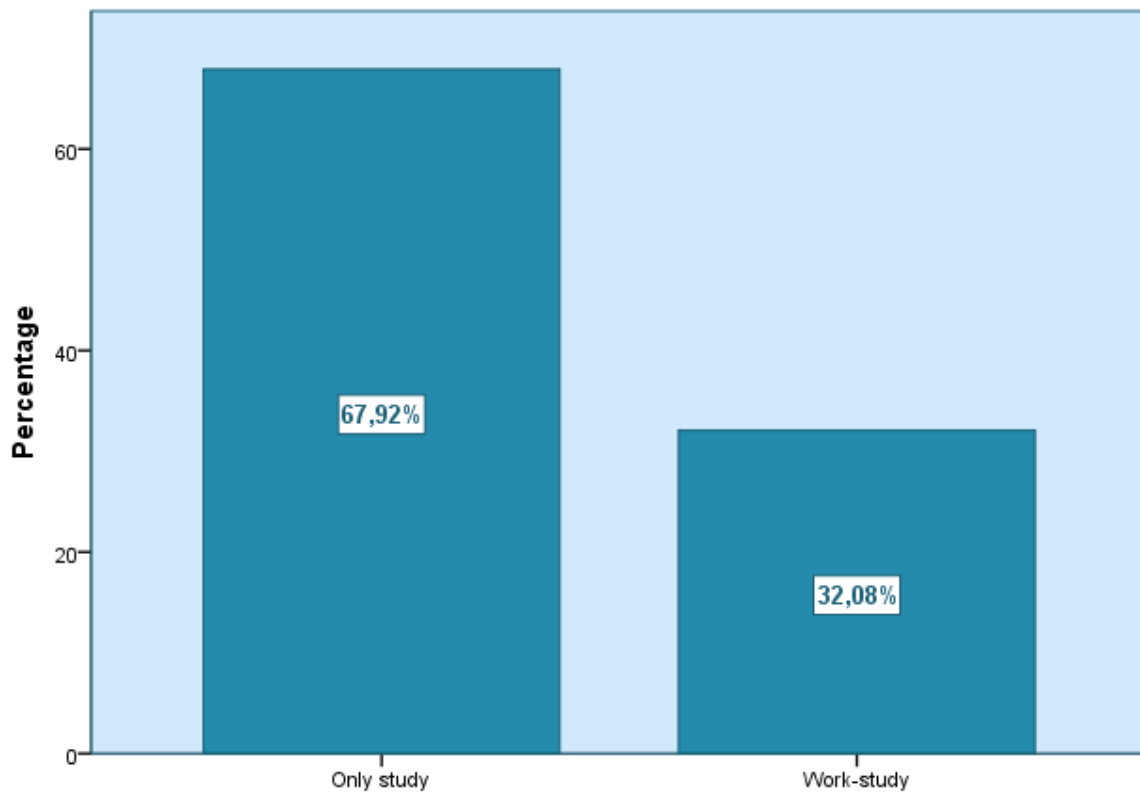
Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

The population average for this subject is mostly students between 22 and 25 years old, this is representing the 49.06% of the total population. A fact that is not surprising provided that this is a subject of the 6th semester of their major. This is closely followed by younger students between the ages of 18 and 21 years old representing a 37.74% of the total population. The outnumbered were the older students from 26 or more representing only a 13.21% of the total population.



GRAPHIC 3

Occupation



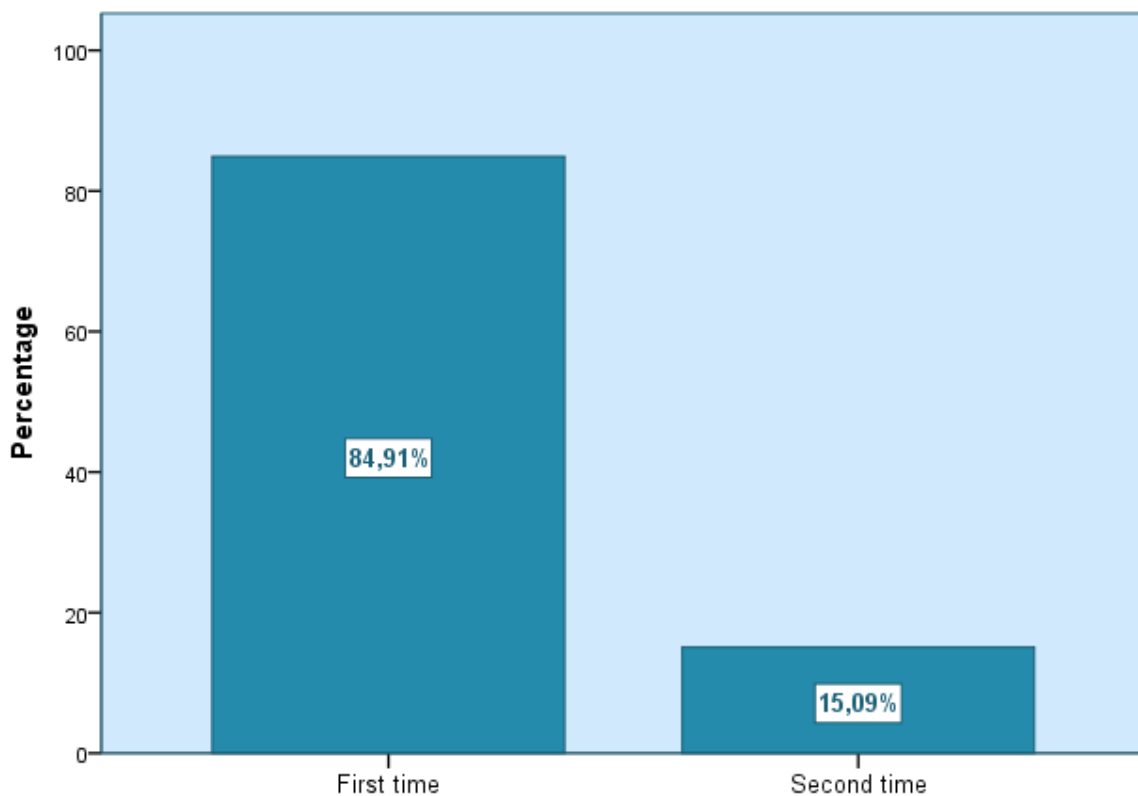
Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

The time students have to practice at home what has been learned in class, especially when it comes to learning a technique is always an important point to be considered.

Taking into consideration that reading is an activity that requires the available time, we can tell that the students included in this sample are in advantage since only a 32.08% of them are part-time students as they are also working, and the majority 67.92% are full-time students giving them the opportunity to focus on the acquisition of the knowledge shared during the classroom time.



GRAPHIC 4

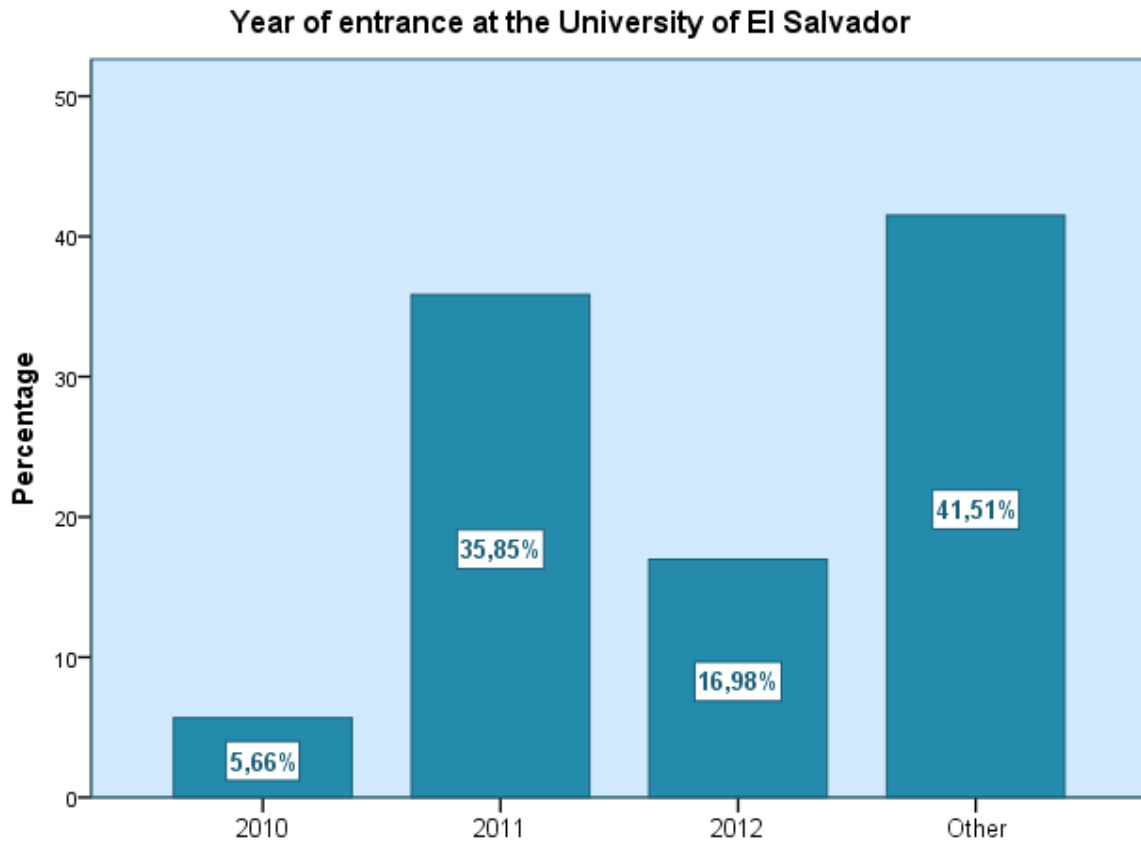
Registration

Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

With the intention of analyzing the advantages that students can have when it comes to re-studying the different reading techniques, it is important to highlight that the majority of students of Readings and Conversation I of this sample are mostly having their first contact with this techniques. Represented by an 84.91% of students on their first registration of this subject, followed by only a 15.09% of students on their second registration for this subject and no students with a third registration of the subject.



GRAPHIC 5

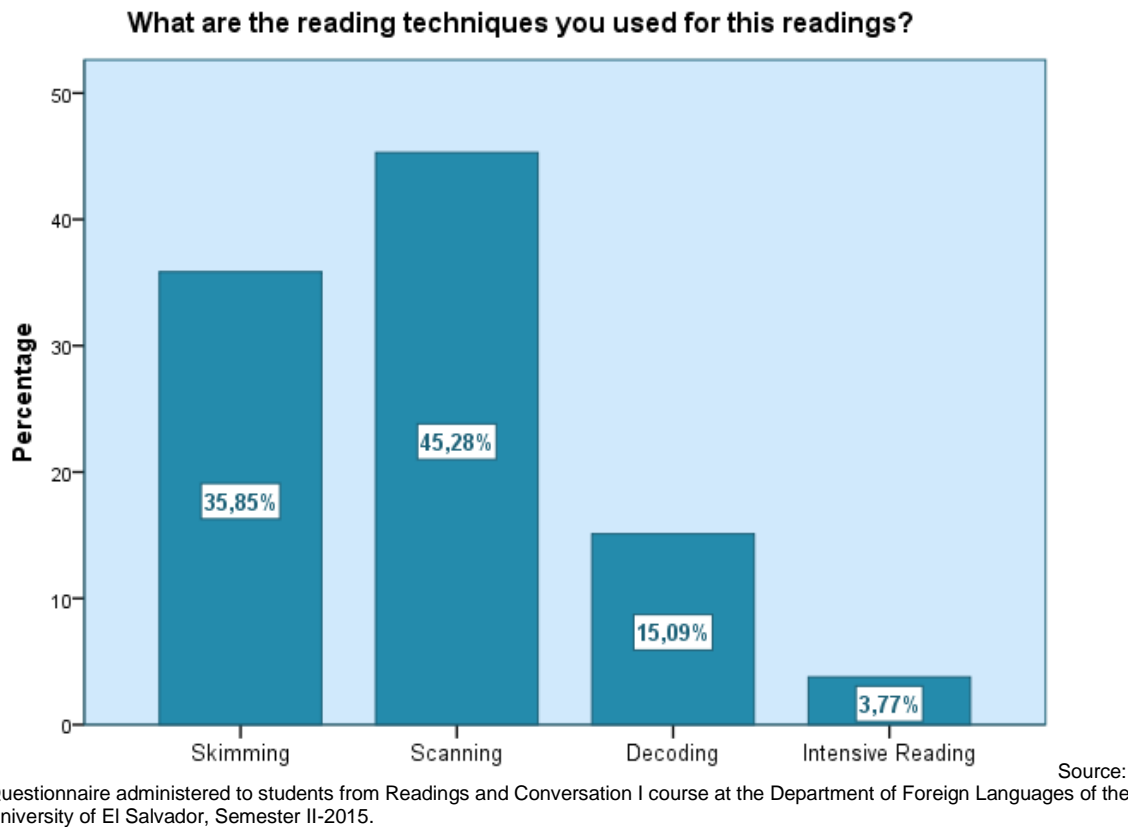


Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

Although this may not be as relevant information to some people, it is important to understand if students have failed other subjects or are not taking all the necessary subjects in the established order. Consequently, this may affect the comprehension degree of English that they have developed through the years; nonetheless, this sample is represented mostly by students year of entrance 2013 or after with a 41.51% of the total population followed by 35.84% for 2011, 16.98% 2012 and only a 5.66% for 2010.



GRAPHIC 6



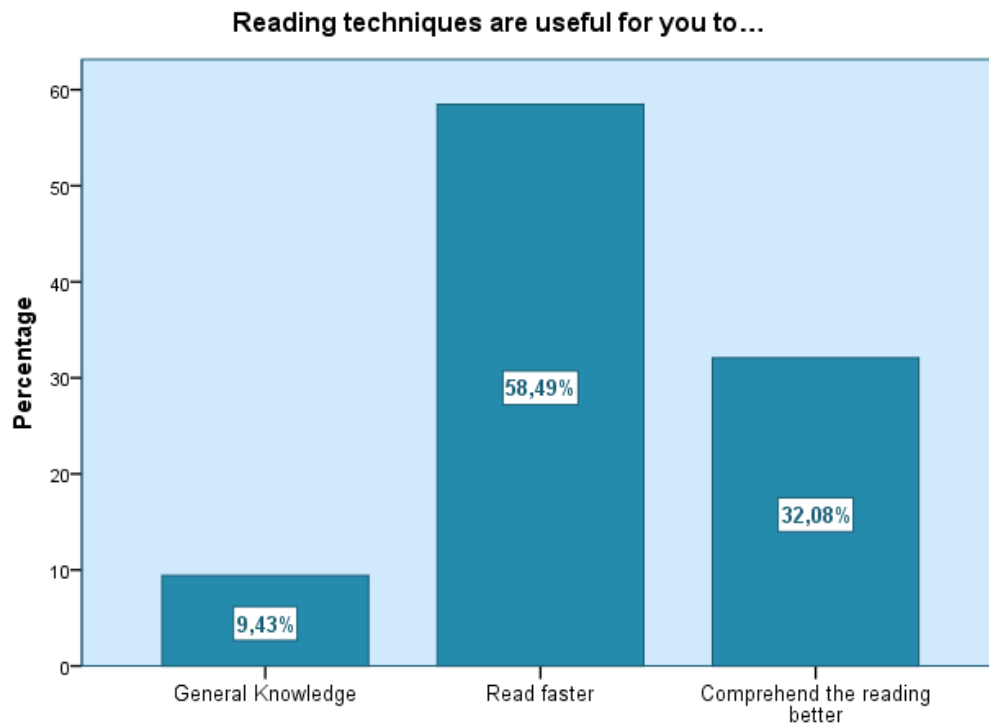
The second test administered to the students of Readings and Conversation I, by the end of the semester, we wanted to understand what was the technique used the most at the moment of taking the test. A 45.28% of the total population manifested they used Scanning as a technique to answer the test, also a big portion of the sample stated they used Skimming as a technique to resolve the test 35.85%.

It is interesting to highlight that only 15.09% of the students selected Decoding as a proper technique to answer the questions in this test followed by only a 3.77% of the population that chose to do an intensive reading to resolve the questions. Above all, we must highlight that all students used a reading technique to comply with the task.



GRAPHIC 7

Student's appreciation of usefulness or reading techniques



Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

As researchers we analyzed whether the reading techniques are important for the development of reading comprehension, we considered important the student's appreciation of the techniques, and when they will be using them.

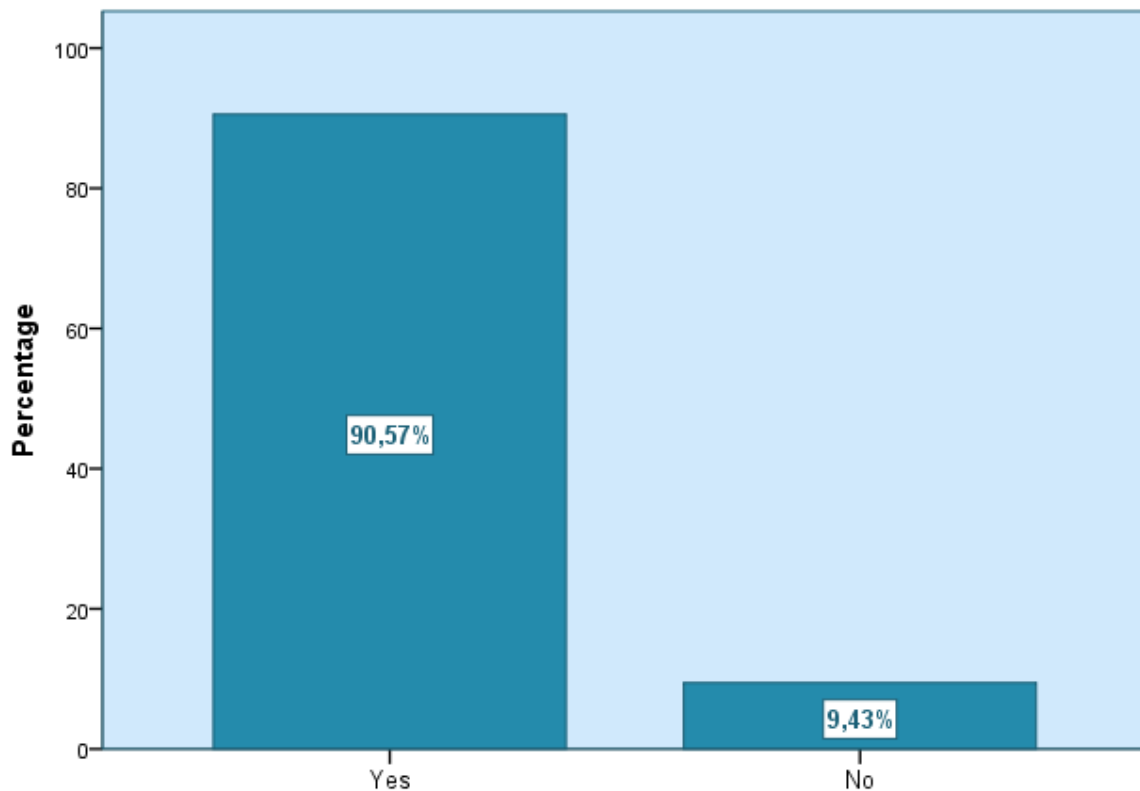
A 58.49% of students, more than half of the population exhibit that reading techniques are useful to read faster, this might be because of the lack of focus on other reading skills such as extensive reading, intensive reading and in-depth reading during the semester and only focusing on fast reading. Nonetheless, a 32.08% state that comprehends the reading better is the usefulness of the techniques followed by only a 9.43% that considered the reading techniques only as general knowledge and do not see any advantage or utility on knowing and studying them.



GRAPHIC 8

Student's appreciation of improvement of English language skills due to reading techniques

Do you feel that reading techniques are helping you to become better in English?



Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

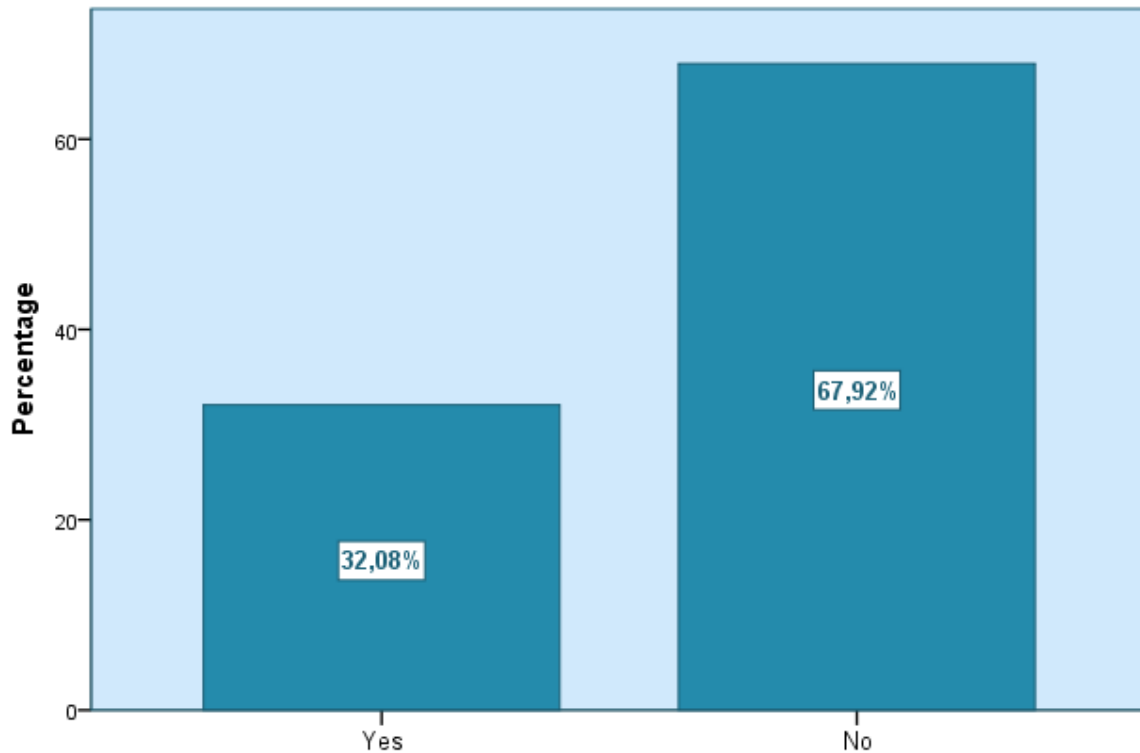
Among the students of Readings and Conversation I, reading techniques are considered very useful to acquire more knowledge and proficiency in English. As 90.57% of the total population considered they have become better in English due to the knowledge acquisition of this new set of skills for them. On the other hand, we have a small number of students 9.43% that consider that the reading techniques have nothing to do with the improvement of their English language level of proficiency. This is a similar number of the students that considered reading techniques as only general knowledge.



GRAPHIC 9

Need of use of dictionary

Did you feel the need to look in the dictionary for a word to comprehend the readings?

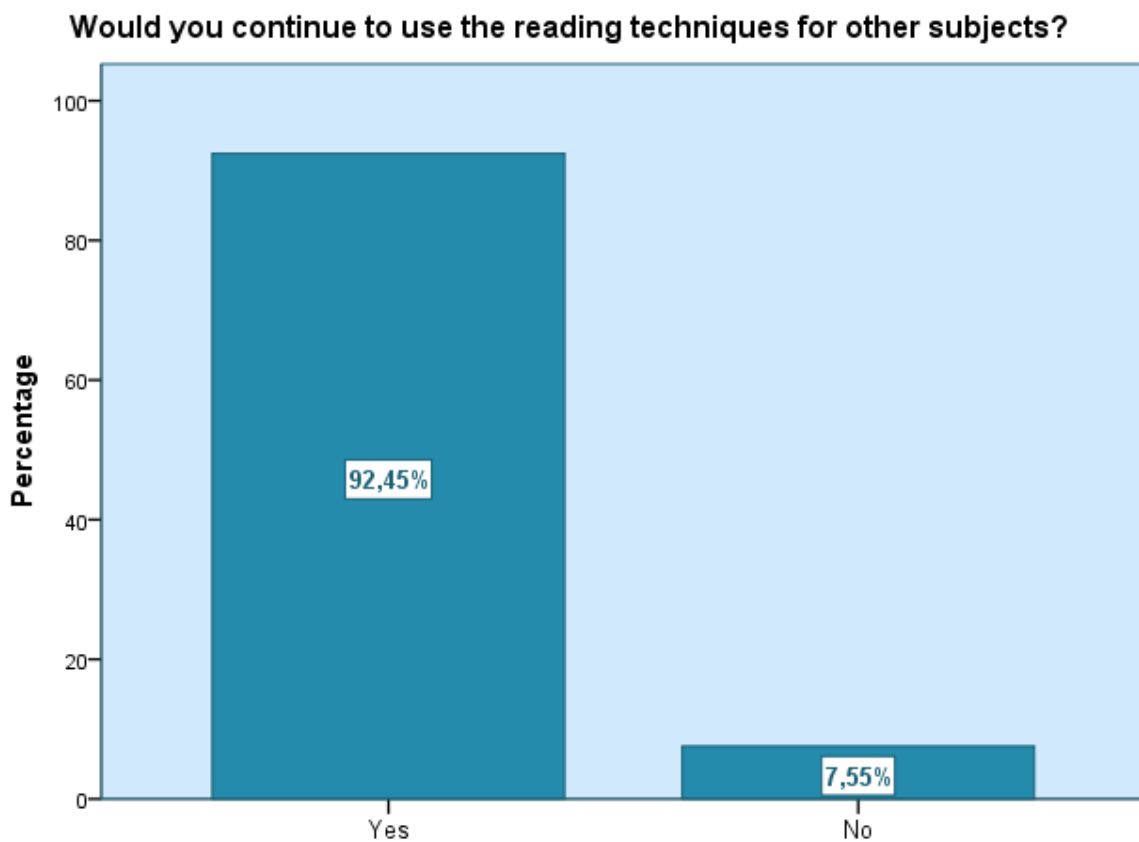


Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

Due to the effects of reading techniques on students of Readings and Conversation I we can demonstrate that the majority of students have acquire a better reading comprehension as only 32.08% of students felt the need to look up a word in the dictionary to understand the meaning that the author wanted to transmit, compared with the 67.92% of students that felt they could understand the message without the need of a dictionary since they have other techniques that help them understand the message and comply with the answers for the test.



GRAPHIC 10

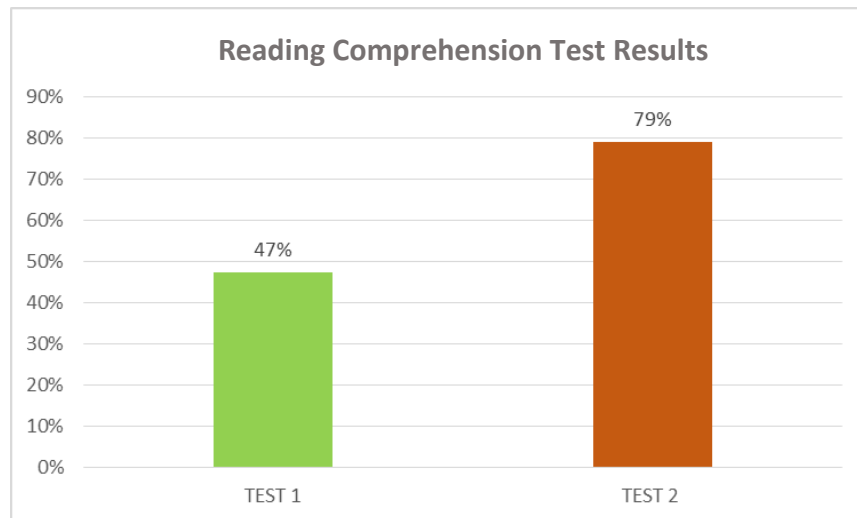


Source: Questionnaire administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015.

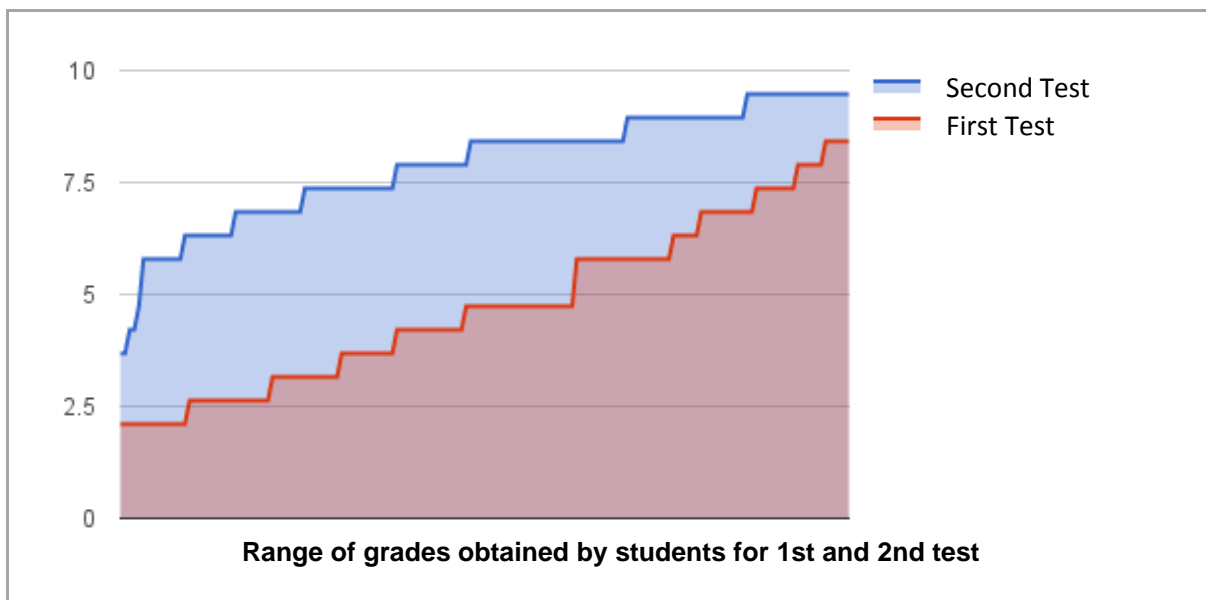
The different reading techniques can be applied to any type of text and in different scenarios, a 92.45% of students considered that the reading techniques are tools they will continue to use for the rest of their subjects to come. On the other hand, the 7.55 % of students did not think that reading techniques can be applied in their future subjects. This is a similar number of the students that considered the reading techniques do not help them become better in English.



LEARNING CURVE FROM BEGINNING OF THE SEMESTER TO THE END OF THE SEMESTER



The previous graphic was implemented to analyze the results obtained in test 1 at the beginning of the Readings and Conversation I when the students' knowledge of reading techniques is minimum or none. The average percentage score reached was 47%.

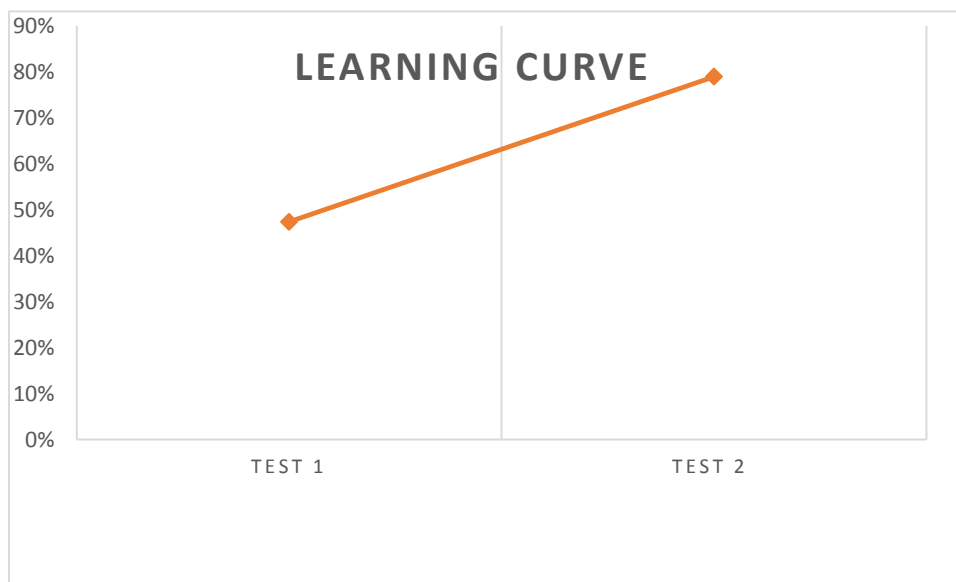




Out of the 159 tests 1 administered to the students indicated an average grade of 4.74 obtaining an average of 9 correct answers out of the 19 questions.

On the other hand with the knowledge acquired during the semester studying the reading techniques students were able to improve the average percentage score to 79%, out of the 159 tests 2 administered to students showed an average grade of 7.89 obtaining 15 correct answers out of the same 19 questions.

Learning curve



Illustrated in the form of a graphic we can perceive that after the Readings and Conversation I subject students reading comprehension skill is improved on a 32% moving from a 47% comprehension degree to a 79% comprehension degree of the readings.

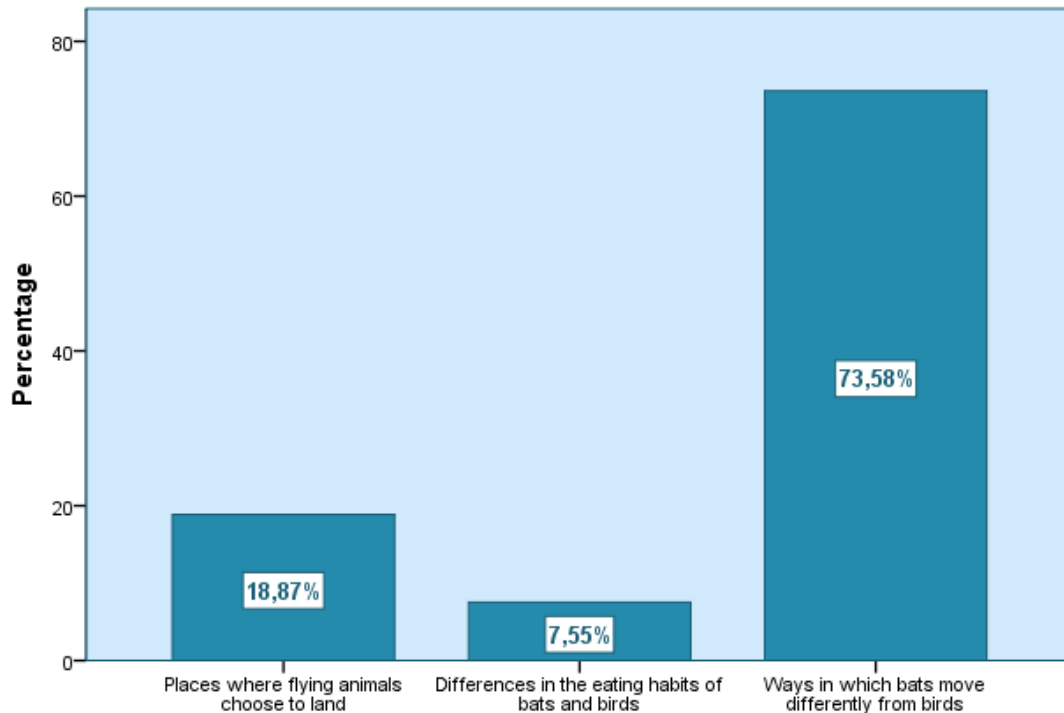


READING TEST ANALYSIS

FIRST READING

GRAPHIC 11

What is the main topic of the passage?



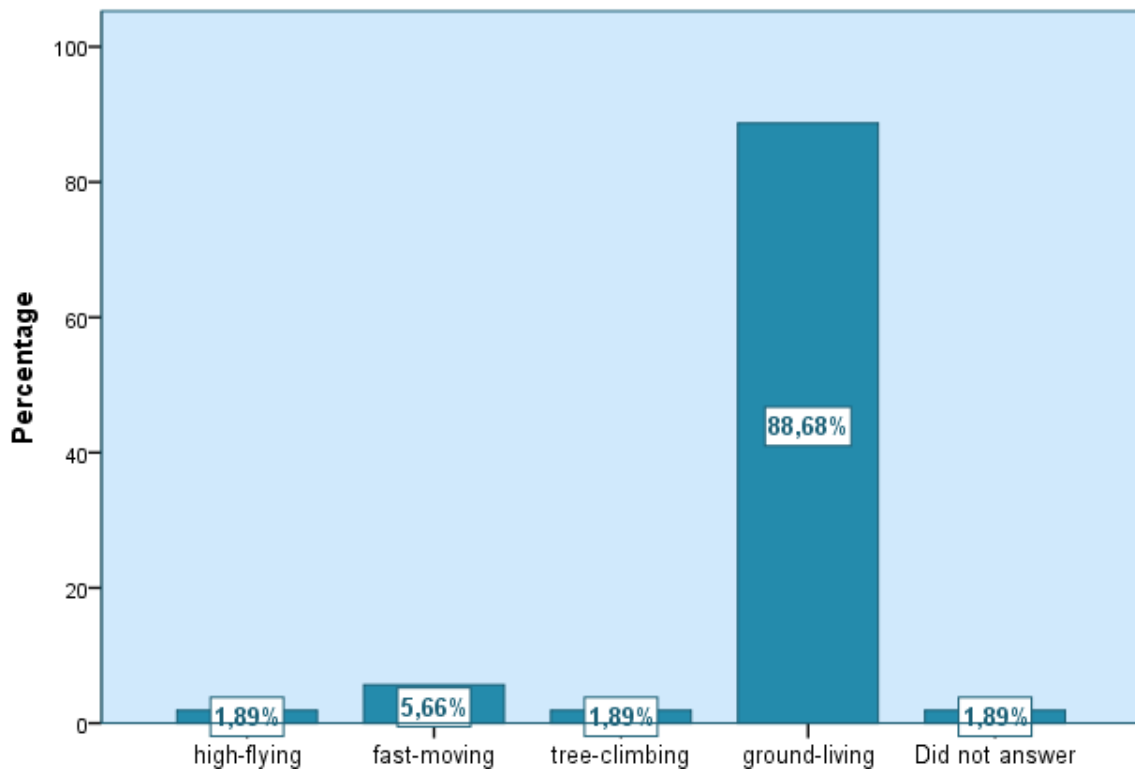
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 6)

In the second test, the 73.58% of students were able to answer the question correctly representing the majority of the sample. Nonetheless, this is followed by an 18.87% of students that answered that the topic of the passage was “*Places where flying animals choose to land*” we consider that the students that used scanning as a technique to answer these questions, were likely to fail given the fact that the word land appears over 5 times in the passage along with other similar words such as landing and landing spot. Therefore, if a student was using scanning as a technique to answer the question seeing the word repeated several times, it was likely to select places to land as the main topic.



GRAPHIC 12

In line 2, the word **terrestrial** is closest in meaning to _____.



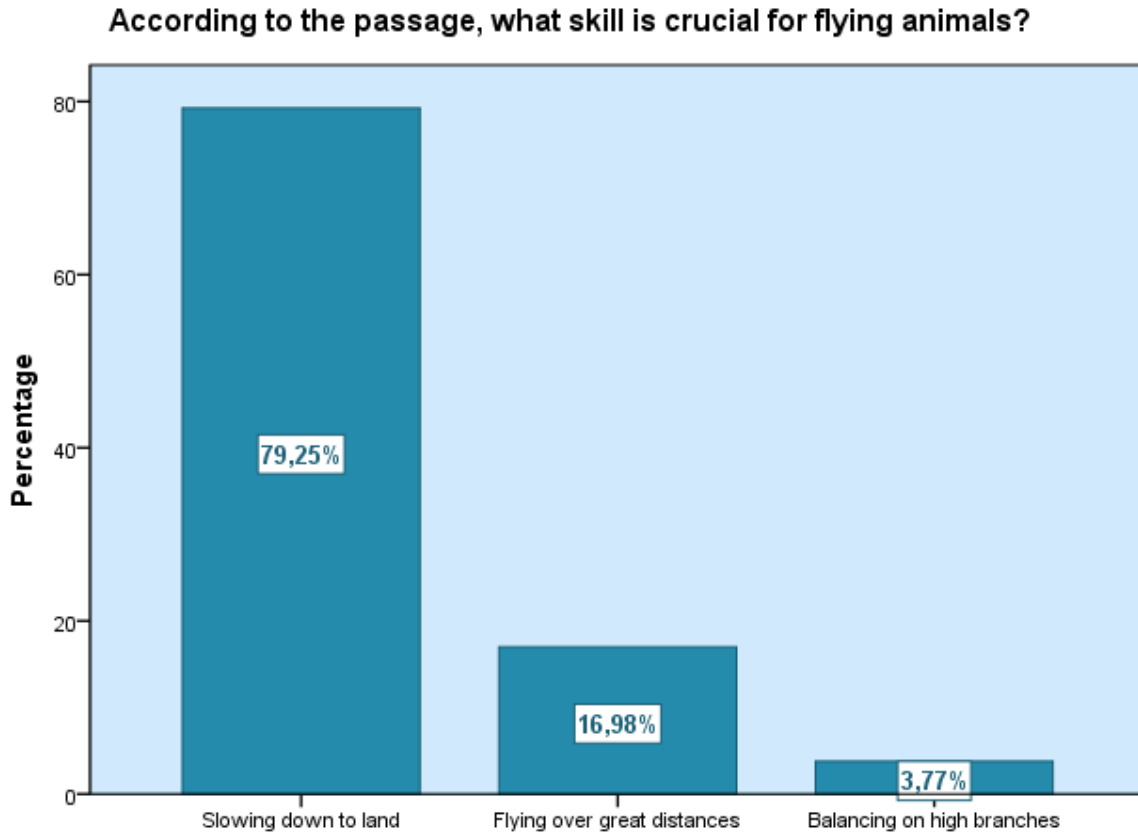
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 7)

Being able to land safely is a critically important skill for all the flying animals. Whereas terrestrial animals face no particular challenge when they need to stop running or crawling.

Ground-living was the correct answer and the 88.68% of the population provided the correct answer, even though most students do not know the exact meaning of the word *Terrestrial* in comparison to our mother language its writing is very similar to the word “*Terrestre*” in Spanish. Therefore, it is easy to use the decoding technique and guessing the meaning from context for this question as its denotation brings to our mind that is an animal that lives on the ground, however, if students were using a different technique or only scanned the possible answers it was somehow easy to fail and think that they are fast moving, therefore, only 5.66% of the population failed to select this answer.



GRAPHIC 13



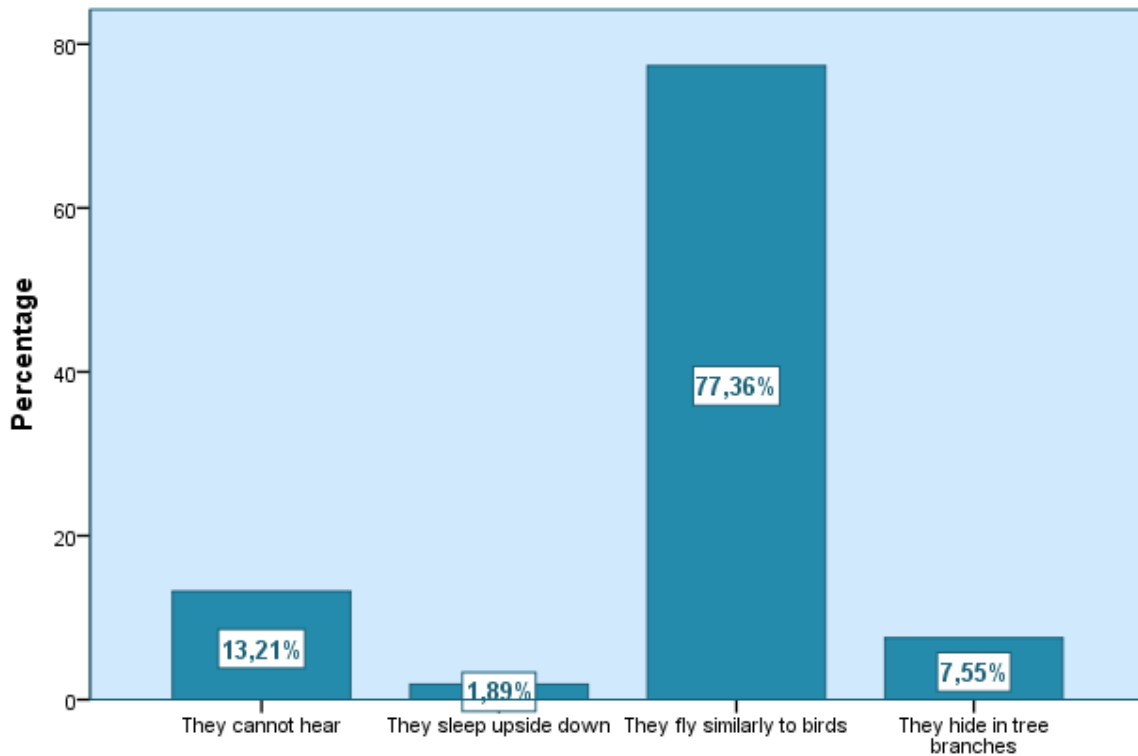
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 8)

The 79.25% of students were able to answer correctly. This is not only because the word land appears several times in the passage but also because the last paragraph of the reading is entirely dedicated to how bats slow down before landing on different places. However, in line 13 of the reading, it states *“This makes coordinating their limbs more difficult for bats and as a result they are not very good at flying long distances”*. Therefore if the student was not applying skimming as a technique to read the article and answer this question, it was likely to get confused to answer and this is reflected by the 16.98% of the population that was not able to find the correct answer to the test question.



GRAPHIC 14

Which of the following is a false assumption about bats that was recently corrected?



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 9)

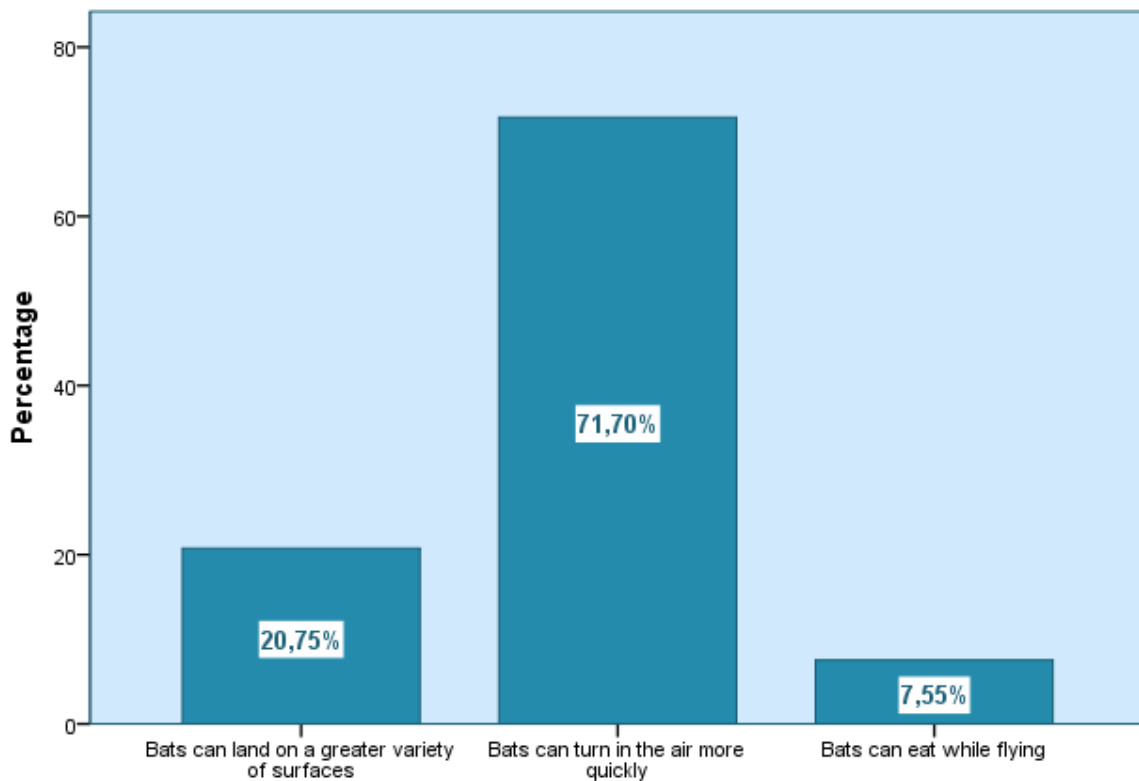
The scanning technique was crucial to answer this question correctly as it is hidden in the passage in Line 7 of the passage states. *In the past, it was believed that in terms of flying mechanics there was little difference between bats and birds.* As a result, the 77.36% of students were able to answer the question correctly.

However, it is very interesting to see how the empirical knowledge students have made them chose the incorrect answer 13.21% of students answer was that they cannot hear, as it is commonly known that bats communicate through waves a sound that humans are not able to hear. Also, the 7.55% of students' answers was that they hide in branches, this is also something based on the empirical knowledge as we know here in El Salvador, and the species usually hides in big trees and sleep upside down 1.89% of students.



GRAPHIC 15

According to the passage, what is an advantage that bats have over birds?



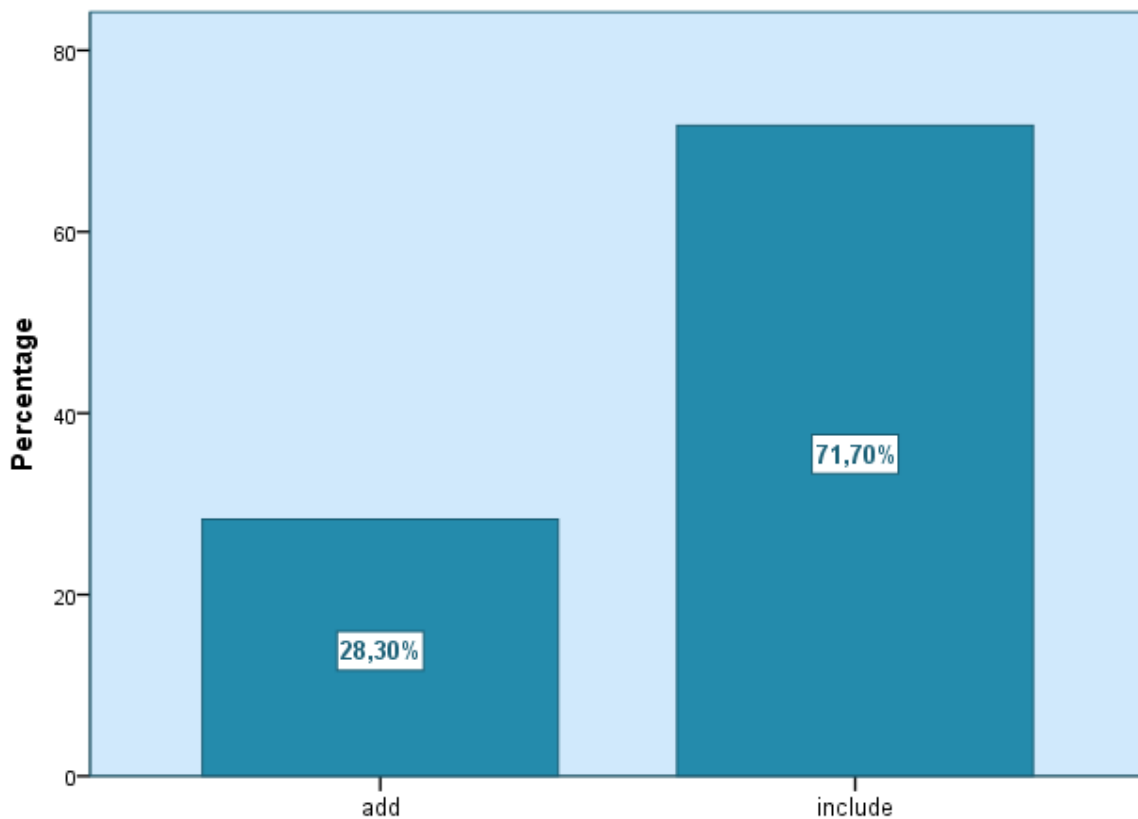
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 10)

In Line 13 of the passage states “*However, they are better at maneuverability*” considering that the word *maneuverability* is not a common word students have in their vocabulary we can observe that the 71.70% of students were able to use correctly the decoding and guessing the meaning from context or even in-depth reading technique as they were able to translate the meaning into other words and find the correct answer. On the other hand, we can see that the 20.75% of students were using skimming or scanning as a technique for this question since the passage does mention three times the variety of surface that bats can land on.



GRAPHIC 16

In line 11, the word **incorporate** is closest in meaning to _____.



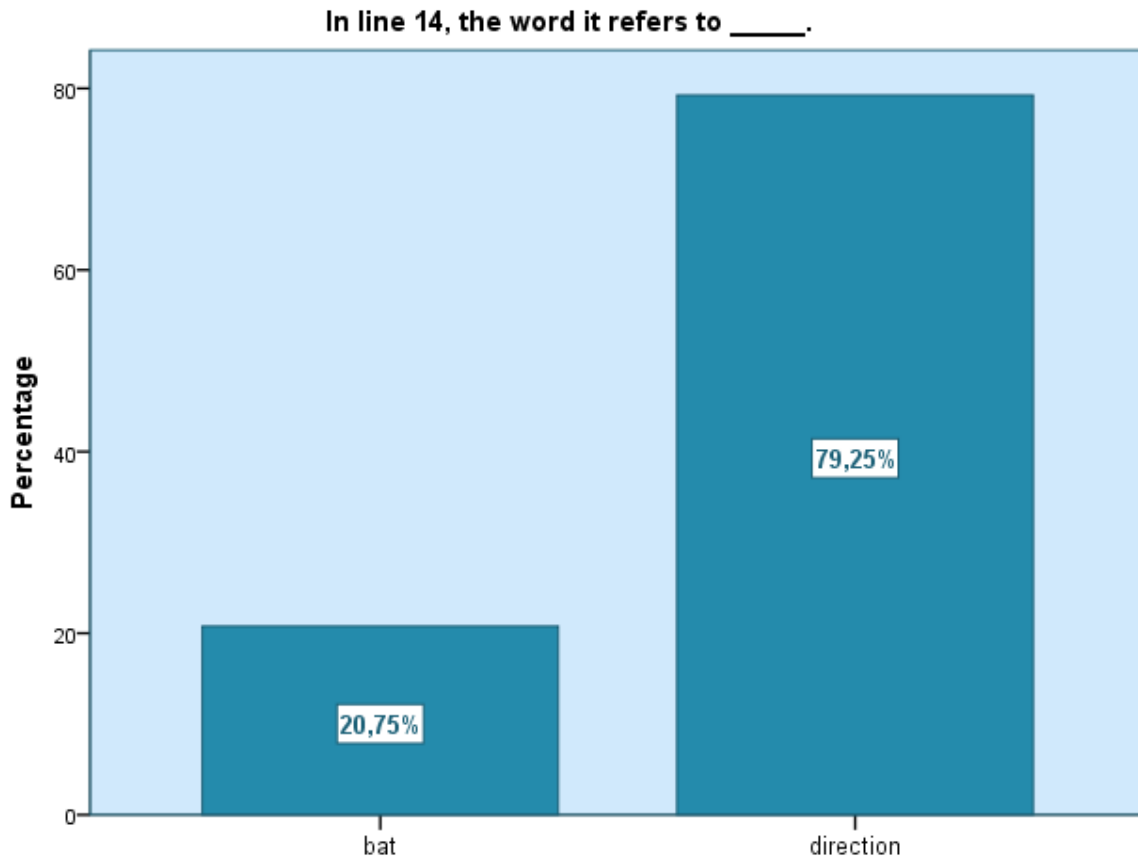
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 11)

Line 11 states *Bats are built differently from birds, and their wings incorporate both their front and hind limbs.*

The 71.70% of students were able to decode the meaning of the word *incorporate* correctly, as you can see from the results the 28.30% of students were close in meaning, the key point to answer this question was to think which is the closest meaning; *add*, *incorporate* and *include* might be synonyms depending on the context. However, *include* was closest in meaning since the word *add* brings along the connotation that what you add can be removed, nonetheless, the limbs on a bat cannot be removed otherwise the bat would not be unable to fly.



GRAPHIC 17



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 12)

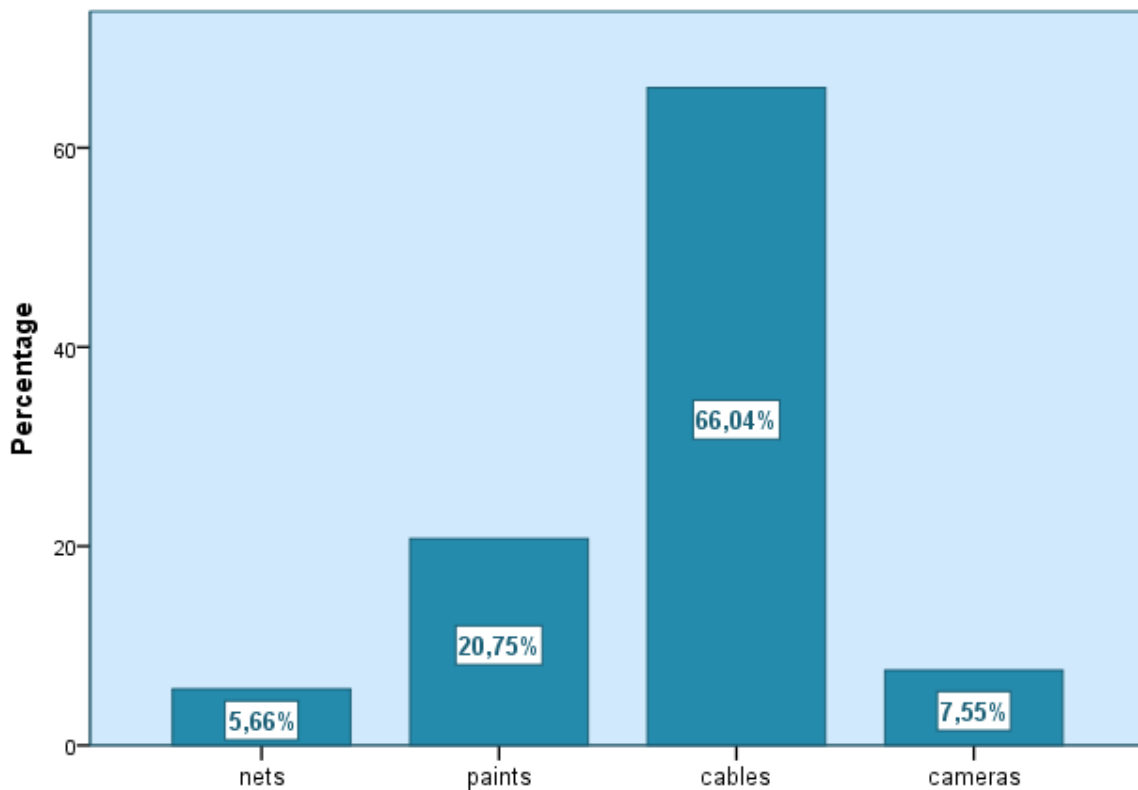
Line 14 states *a bat can change its direction of flight or completely reverse it something a bird cannot easily do*

To answer this question it was required to analyze the grammatical structure of the phrase and the 79.25% of the students were able to understand the meaning of the phrase, Although, there was a 20.75% of students, that were confused most likely because the bat is the subject of the phrase.



GRAPHIC 18

The researchers used all of the following to study bats EXCEPT _____.



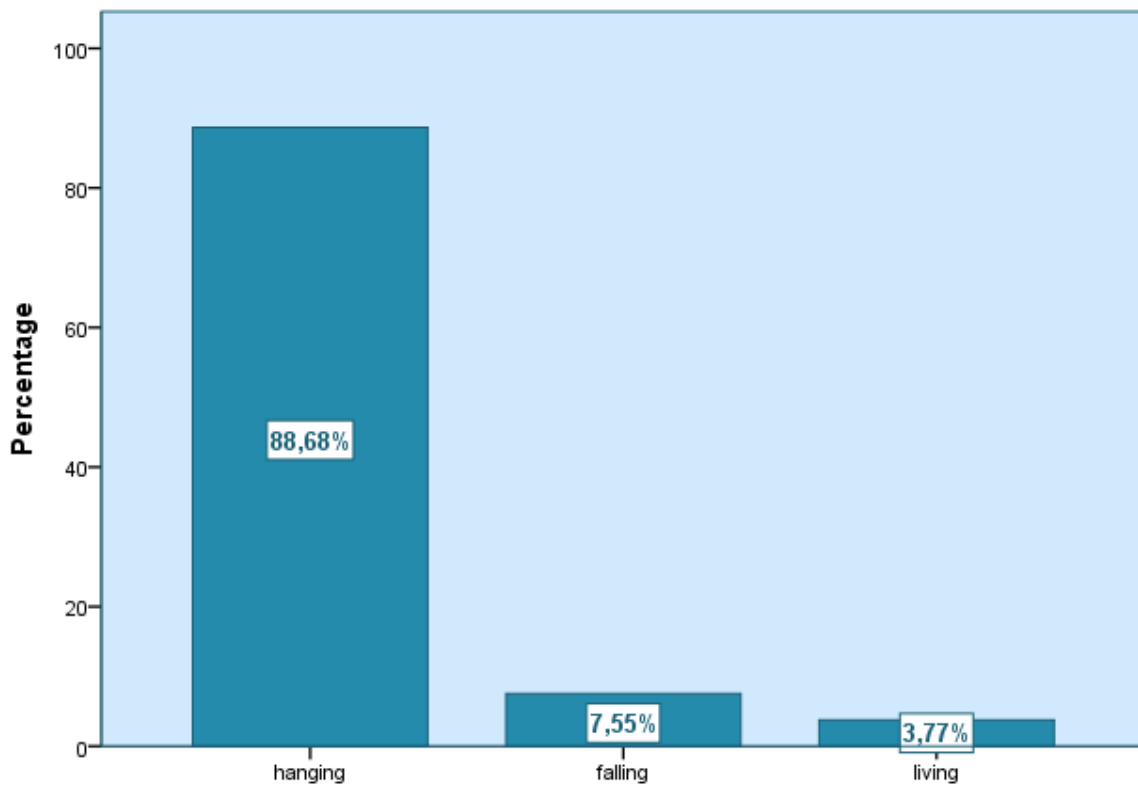
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 13)

Using scanning was the easiest and most effective way to answer this question the words *net*, *paint* and *cameras* are words that can be found on the reading. This task was successfully performed by the 66.04% of students, however, a big portion of students 20.75% failed answering paints, this is mainly because the word “*paints*” is not literally in the passage. In Line 21 the passage states “*They painted spots on the bats*”. The paint is not literally in the passage but it is implied that the researchers were using paint.



GRAPHIC 19

In line 20, the word *suspended* is closest in meaning to _____.



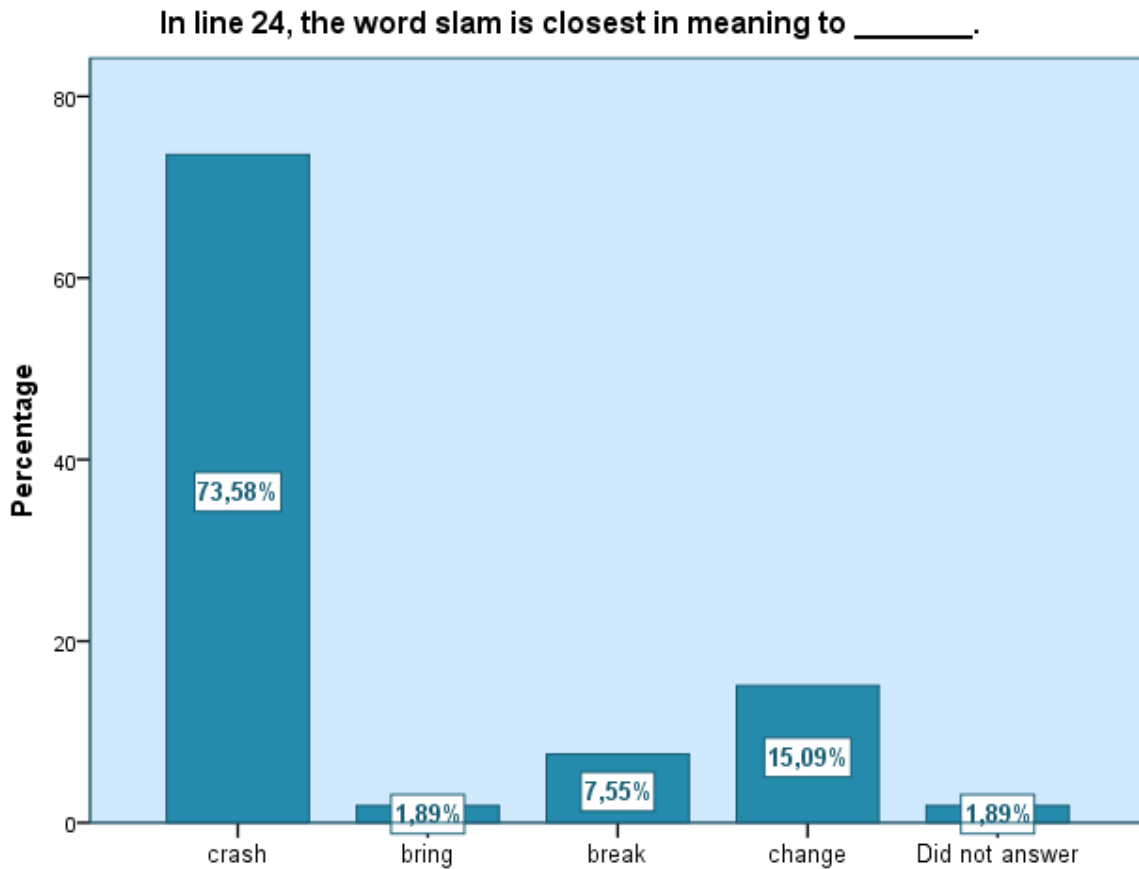
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 14)

Line 20 states “A group of researchers recently used video cameras to film bats landing on nets suspended from the ceiling of their laboratory”.

The 88.68% of students were able to answer the question correctly. Using the decoding technique it was easy to identify something suspended in the ceiling, meaning that it was hanging in the ceiling.



GRAPHIC 20



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 15)

Line 24 states “*One downside of this landing routine is that bats often slam into their landing spot with some force*”.

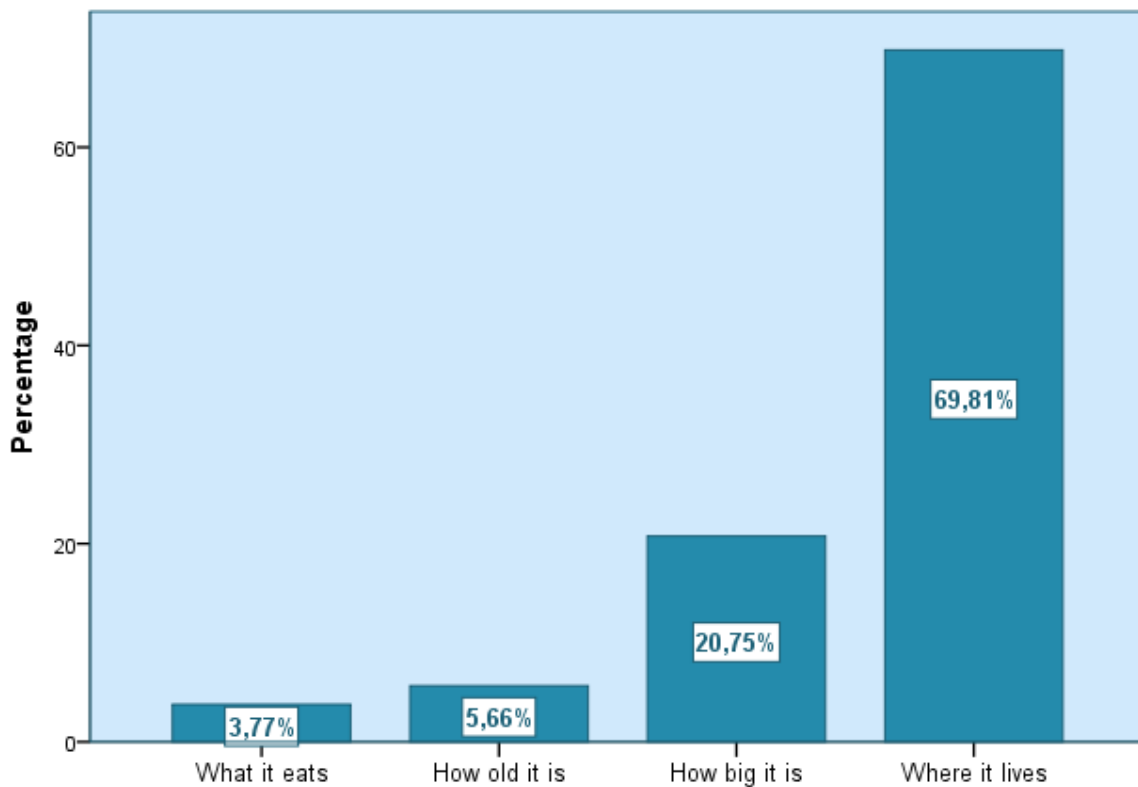
The 73.58% of students were able to use the decoding technique and understand that crash was the correct answer due to the use of the word “*force*” in the phrase.

The 15.09% of students thought that change was the meaning of the word, this could possibly be due to making a relation between the previous paragraph that was talking about *bats* changing direction faster than birds.



GRAPHIC 21

According to the passage, what helps determine a bat's landing speed?



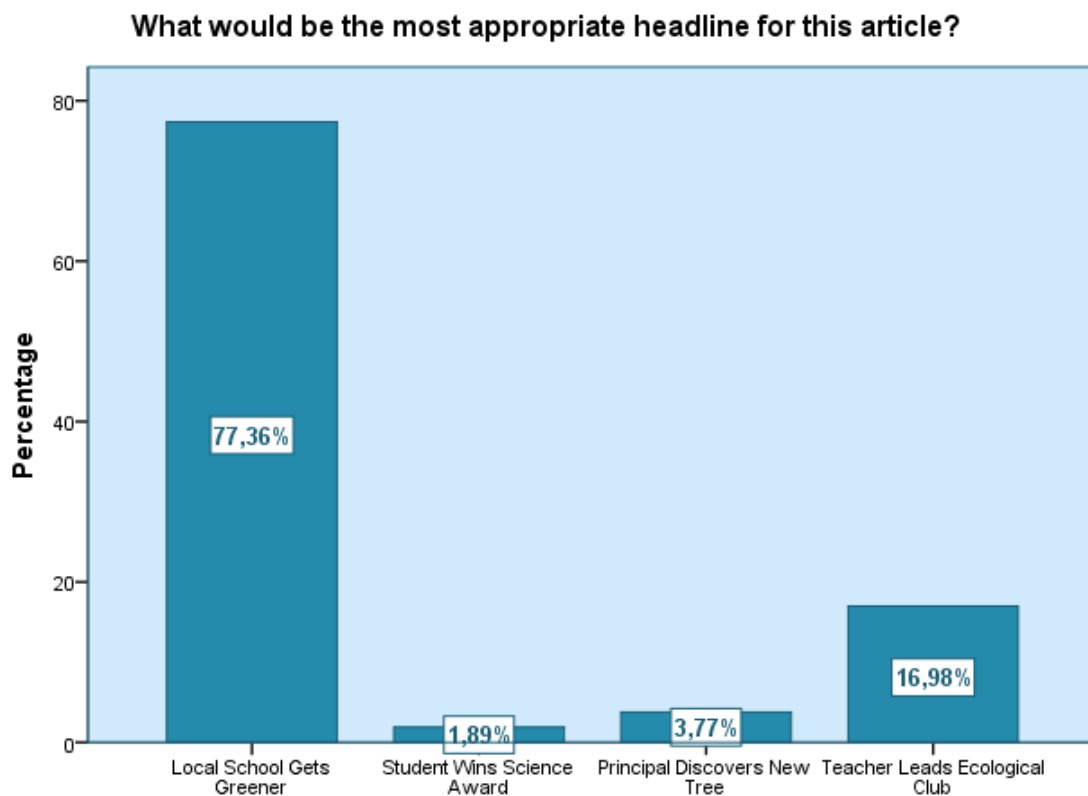
Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 16)

According to the last few lines of the reading, the landing speed was determined by the habitat of the bats. The correct answer was easy to find either by using the scanning or skimming techniques the 69.81% of students was successful at it. On the other hand, we have an interesting phenomena as some of the students logic was conflicted during this question the 20.75% of students thought that it was determined by their size, even though the passage mentions nothing about the size of bats or animals but we have the general knowledge that the bigger the object is the heavier it would be and by the laws of gravity we know it would fall faster.



SECOND READING

GRAPHIC 22

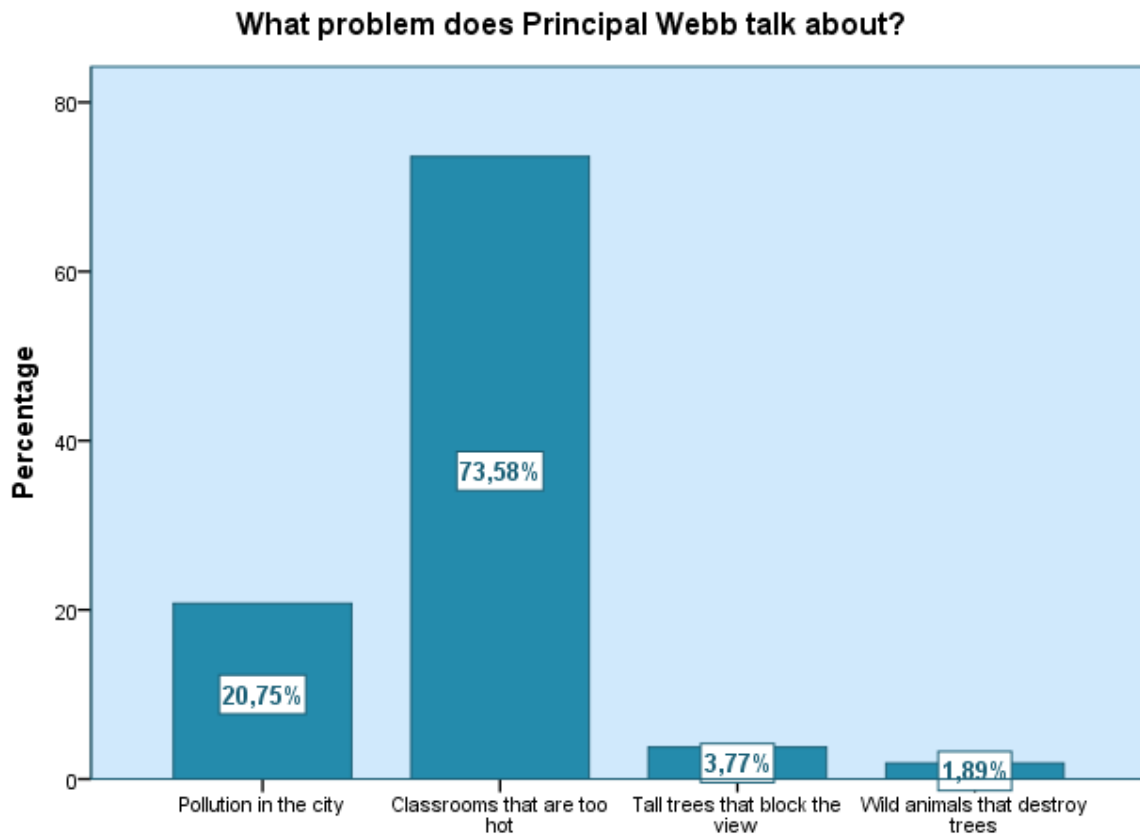


Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 17)

The second reading is dedicated to a school that decides to plant trees as part of an ecological movement led by a principal Maxx, he is the main character of the passage, the word *he* is used referring to this teacher all over the paragraphs and his words are transcribed in the passage, as a result it was easy to think that “*Teacher leads ecological club*” was the correct answer and 16.98% of students selected that headline. However, the majority of students, 77.36%, decided that “*Local School gets greener*” was the correct answer. It was only through an extensive reading that the true message of the author was comprehended; the passage was not only about principal Maxx but about the activities held at the school to create a greener environment.



GRAPHIC 23



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 18)

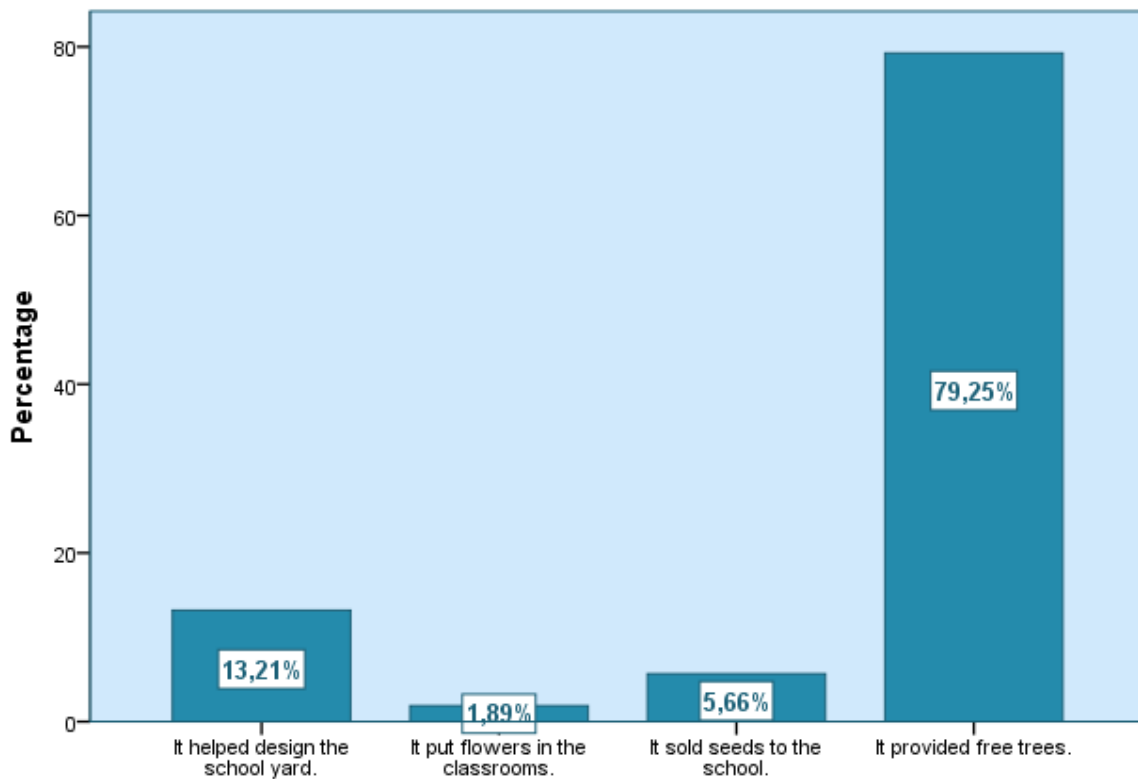
The message and meaning of this reading was to communicate in the newspaper about how a high school was implementing good habits to help the environment and avoid pollution, this is stated in the first paragraph and 20.75% of students selected pollution in the city as their answer to this question, The skimming technique was necessary to arrive to the correct answer, since skimming is to collect important information and transcript from a character of the story, in this case, a transcript from Principal Maxx Webb.

Line 19 states *“It gets so hot inside the building that the students start to sweat during their afternoon classes”*



GRAPHIC 24

What did the Ecology Club do for Marina Hills High School?



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 19)

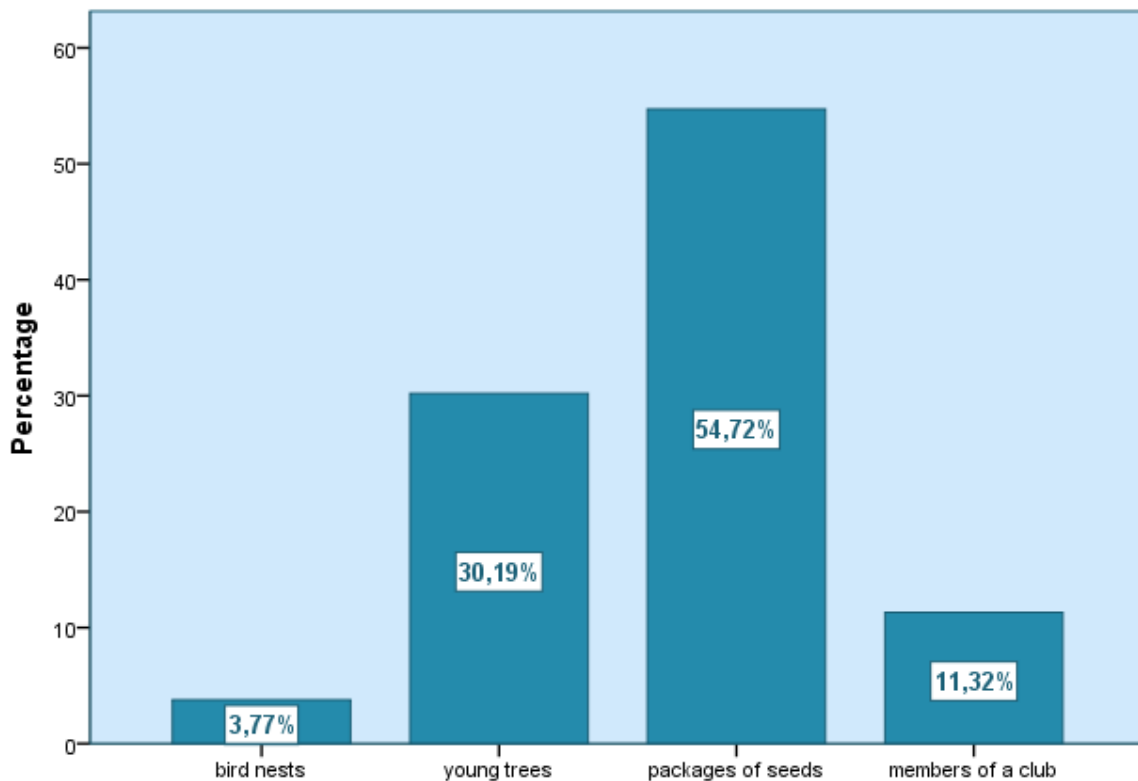
The passage does not mention specifically the words provide free trees, therefore, students that were using the scanning technique could easily think that the ecology club helped to design the schoolyard, however, it is mentioned in the passage the designing ideas and process; therefore in literal words, the 13.21% of the students selected that answer.

However, line 5 states *the club offers free trees to institutions willing to plant them on their ground*. The 70.25% of students were able to understand the meaning of this phrase. It is not literally stating that the club provided free trees to Marina High school. But the passage mentions that Marina High School is in the need of plants in their land.



GRAPHIC 25

In line 13, the word **seedlings** is closest in meaning to _____.



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 20)

Line 13 states *“But when seedling arrived, Webb had an idea, instead of planting the young trees in front of the school, he thought it would be better to put them behind the school”*

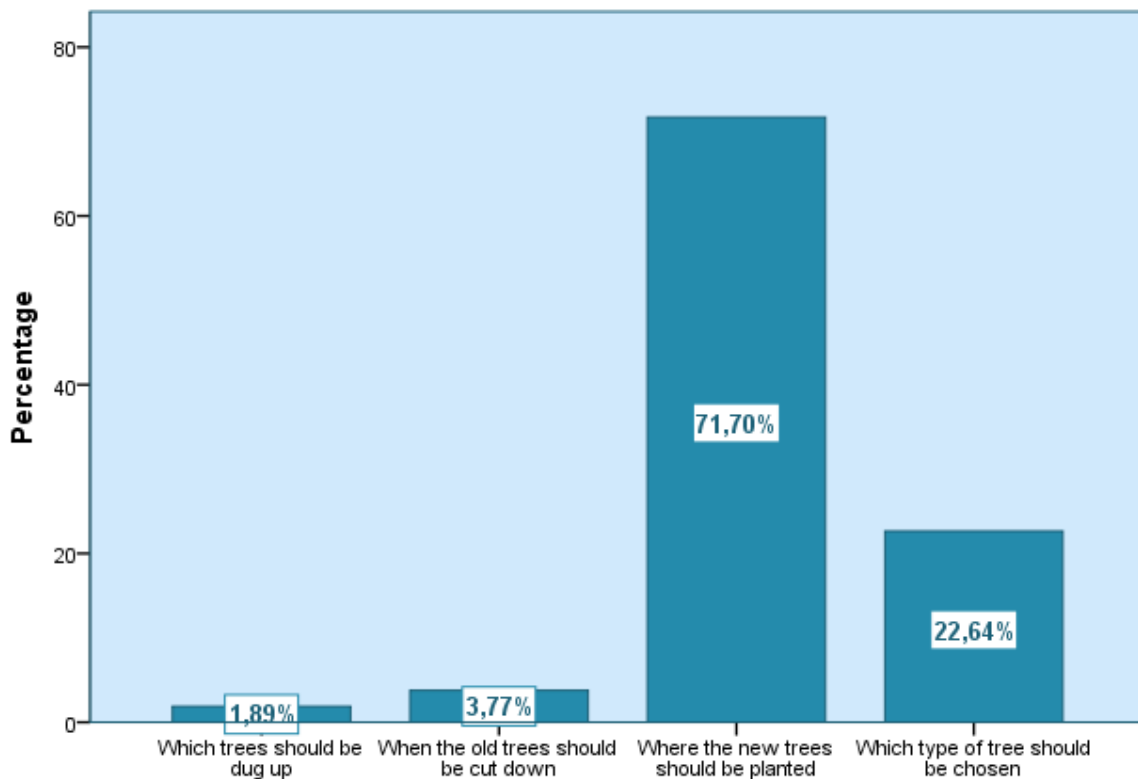
This is the only question of this research in which students even knowing the reading techniques, were not able to answer correctly. Only a 30.19% of the students answered young trees, even when the phrase itself gives the meaning of the word seedling.

The majority of students 54.72% created a relation between the word seedling and seeds, because of its etymological structure, as a result, they were unable to decode the meaning correctly.



GRAPHIC 26

What decision was changed?



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 21)

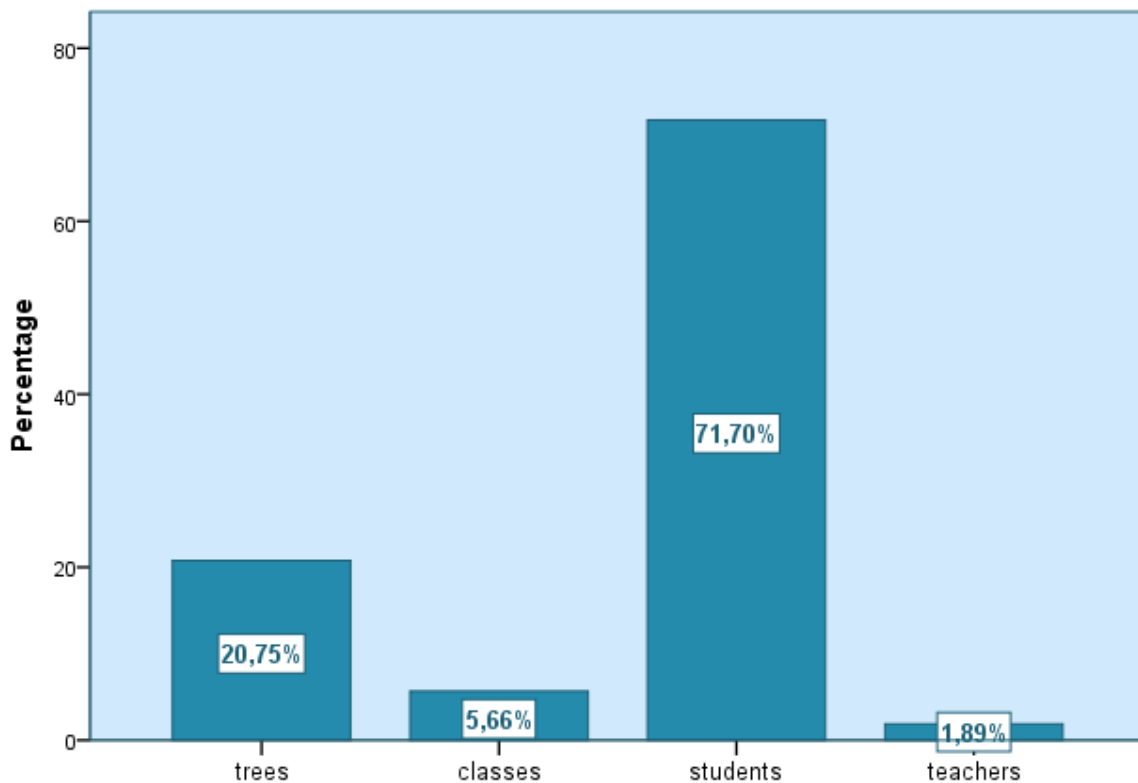
Line 13 states *‘But when seedling arrived, Webb had an idea, instead of planting the young trees in front of the school, he thought it would be better to put them behind the school’*. However Line 35 states *‘We requested Eucalyptus and Willow trees’*.

Both things are mentioned in the passage. The words, requested can be directly related to the word *decision*, students that were using the scanning technique to find the answer to this question were easily confused by line 35. The 22.64% of the students selected the answer. The decision of where to plant the trees is stated in paragraph 3, 4 and 5. However the word decision or any of his synonyms is not mentioned therefore, it is required a minimum of skimming the text to find the correct answer.



GRAPHIC 27

In line 22, the word *them* refers to _____.



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 22)

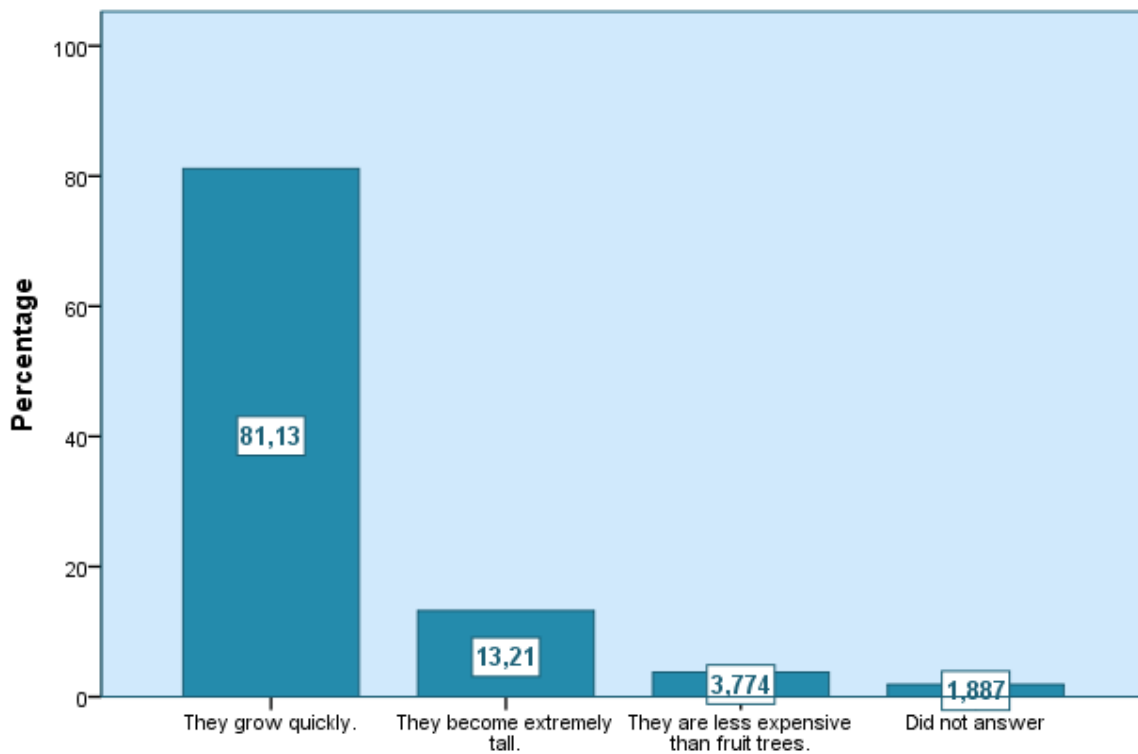
Line 22 states *Now the shades from our trees will bring them some relief*

71.70% of the students were able to understand the phrase, principal Maxx is referring to the students that are seating in the afternoon classes, however a 20.75% of students responded that the word *them* was referring to trees possibly because they analyzed the phrase alone and not the paragraph and since the word *trees* is closest to the word *them*.



GRAPHIC 28

What can be inferred from the article about eucalyptus and willow trees?



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 23)

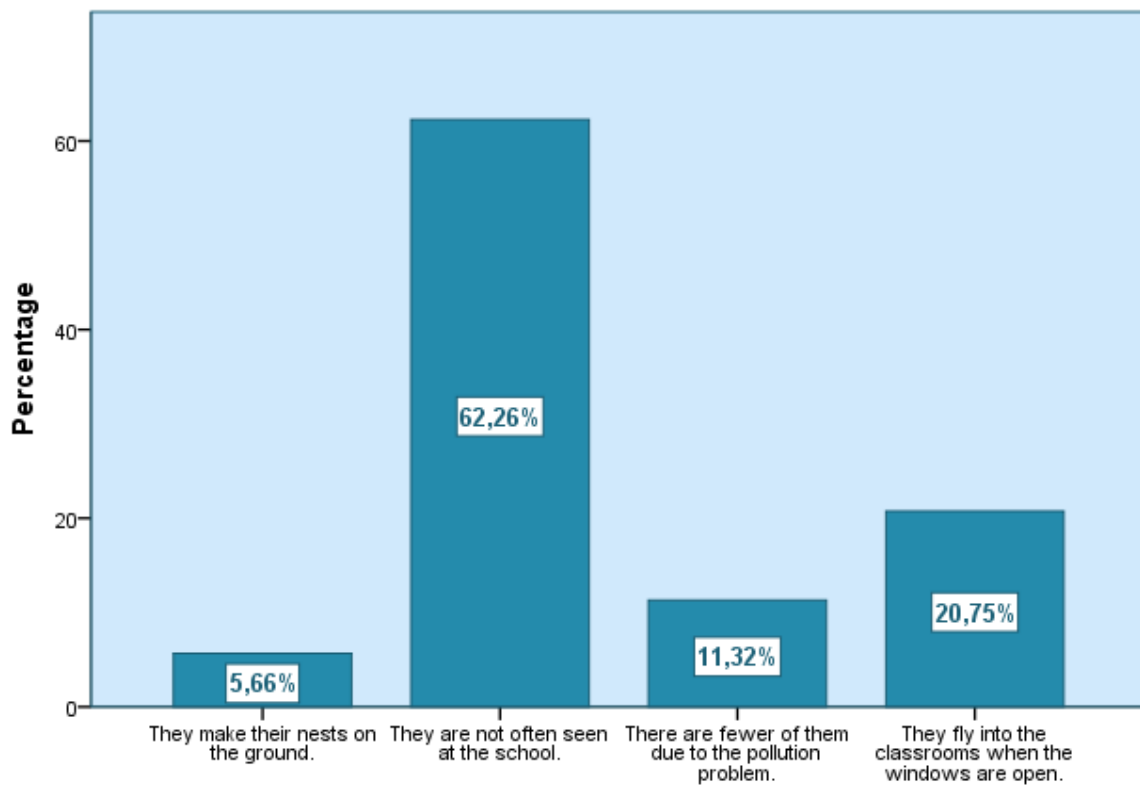
Paragraph 6 Line 28 states *“The relief won’t come until the trees grow taller, but the school will not have to wait long because it requested two species of tree that grow quickly”*

Both the word tall and the word quickly are in the phrase. Therefore, it was easy to get confused and think that the tall characteristic was the one referring to the eucalyptus and the willow tree 13.21% of students got confused and selected the answer but the majority, 81.13%, was able to understand the phrase by scanning or skimming and find the correct answer.



GRAPHIC 29

What does Principal Webb imply about the local birds?



Source: Reading comprehension test administered to students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, Semester II-2015. (Question 24)

In the last paragraph line 40 states *“if all you have is grass lawn with no trees you can’t expect the local birds to come visit , they have no place to make their nest”*

To answer this question it was necessary to use a minimum of skimming technique to understand and answer correctly. It would be difficult to scan for the answer as *bird* is mentioned 3 times more in the passage, resulting in 62.26% of the students answering correctly.

The 20.75% of students selected the option when windows are opened, probably because of the word window is in the passage.



CHAPTER V

A) MAJOR FINDINGS

1. The constant use of the reading techniques is helpful to improve the reading comprehension proficiency. This was proved by the results of the second test, in which students improved a 32% on their average reading comprehension.
2. The reading comprehension proficiency that students have at this level of the major is not the one that they are suppose to have as they only reached 47% of accuracy on the test for Advanced English, in which the average score needs to be at least 70%.
3. After the Readings and Conversation I course the students are able to reach an advanced level of reading comprehension. This was demonstrated by the results of the second test, where students reached a 79% of accuracy.
4. Scanning is the reading technique that students from the Department of Foreign Languages use the most. According to the survey administered to students from the Readings and Conversation I course, the 45% used this technique to answer the test.
5. Decoding is the least used reading technique for students from the Department of Foreign Languages. According to the survey administered, only the 15% of the population of the students from the Readings and Conversation I course used this technique to answer the test.



6. Students are not able to correctly identify what reading technique is better to implement for a given text. For example, when asking the closest meaning to the word “*seedlings*”, only 30.19% of students were able to identify the correct meaning, this may be because as they answered on the questionnaire, 38.85% of the students used Skimming and a 45.28% used Scanning. However, the reading technique that could help them to get the answer will be Decoding but only 15.09% used it.



B) ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

a) General Research Question

Was there an improvement in reading comprehension proficiency developed by the knowledge and implementation of the reading techniques studied on Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015?

During this research, it was revealed that reading techniques are tools that students can use to improve their reading comprehension proficiency. Helping them to improve a 32% on their average reading comprehension. However, it is important to mention that 32.08% of students still needed a dictionary to fully comprehend the readings.

b) Subsidiary Research Questions

- *What was the reading comprehension degree that the students from Readings and Conversation I course had at the beginning of the semester?*

After administering the reading comprehension test to students from Readings and Conversation I, it was found that the reading comprehension degree of students was an average of 47%. This can be considered a low score taking into consideration that students have already complied all the English courses since Advanced English II is a requirement for this subject.

- *What was the reading comprehension degree that the students from Readings and Conversation I course had at the end of the semester?*



After administering the second reading comprehension test to the students from Readings and Conversation I at the end of the semester, it was demonstrated in this research that the reading comprehension proficiency that students had at the end of the semester was a 79% average score.

- *Did the level of reading comprehension increase with the knowledge of reading techniques?*

Yes, it was demonstrated in this research that the level of reading comprehension proficiency improved up to a 32% average score. Also, it is important to remark that a 90.57 % of students consider that the reading techniques help them to improve their English level overall.

- *Which reading techniques are being used the most by the students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador?*

In this research, with the help of student's results, it was discovered that 45.28% of the students selected scanning as the technique they use the most follow by 35.85 of students that selected skimming as the technique they use the most.

- *Are the reading techniques helpful for the reading comprehension?*

Yes, as it has been mentioned, the continuous use of reading techniques demonstrated to be very helpful for students to improve their reading comprehension, helping them to improve a 32% on their average score.



C) CONCLUSIONS

At the end of this study, the researchers reached the following conclusions:

The constant use of reading techniques demonstrated a positive impact on the reading comprehension proficiency of students in the Department of Foreign Languages. Helping them to improve their grades and English level by the acquisition of an important receptive skill. This impact can be observed at the end of the second test when students reflected a significant improvement in the reading comprehension proficiency.

In order to take Readings and Conversation I course, students the Department of Foreign Languages have to take the five intensive English subjects that the curriculum requires. That means students should be in the advanced English level for instance they should have a CI level of reading comprehension at this level of the major. Cambridge University established that to obtain a CI, which corresponds to Advanced English, the average score needs to be 70%. However, the average score obtained by students with the first reading comprehension test was only a 47% of accuracy.

With the help of the different reading techniques, the level of reading comprehension proficiency has a significant increase, up to a 32%. This means that the Readings and Conversation I course is helping students to reach and even surpass the average score expected for the advanced English level, this was demonstrated in the second test where students obtained an average score of 79%. However, we noticed that students are using the reading techniques just to answer the test faster.



For students from the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador, the reading technique that was used the most was scanning and a 45.28% of the 159 students evaluated used it for this research, however, this is not a technique that helps students reading comprehension proficiency as it was demonstrated in the results for some of the questions of the test where it was clear that the use of scanning caused students to fail in selecting the correct answers.

The reading technique that students from the Department of Foreign Languages use least is “Decoding” the lack of use of this specific technique causes students not to comprehend the full meaning of some phrases. e. g. In question 20 only a 30.19% of the sample was able to use the technique to comprehend the phrase, students that cannot decode words lack fluency in their reading and have a limited vocabulary.

To achieve better reading comprehension proficiency not only the knowledge but also the correct implementation of the different reading techniques is necessary. Even though it is demonstrated in this research that students have the knowledge of reading techniques and how to use each one of them but they have not reached yet the correct level of implementation as some of them were using techniques that lead them to incorrect answers.



D) LIMITATIONS

Some limitations to do this research are listed as follows:

- ✓ During the gathering process some of the teachers in charge of the subject “Readings and Conversation I” denied the permission to pass the instruments in their courses.

- ✓ Another obstacle was that reading test was intended to take between 20 to 30 minutes, as a result, some students did not want to take the test or did it in a couple of minutes what could make them fail in some questions.

- ✓ In addition, it was difficult to coordinate the meetings among the colleagues because of the different work schedules.

- ✓ Another limitation was the administrative process from the University of El Salvador, while the undergraduate work was registered on March 2015, the official assignment of the advisor was given on June 2015.



CHAPTER VI

RECOMMENDATIONS

For students:

1. Students should apply the different techniques according to the paragraph needs not only to improve their grades but also to use them often.
2. We recommend students to practice the use of the decoding technique to help them improve their reading comprehension and to help them decrease the use of dictionaries.
3. Students should read at least one book every month in order to create a habit. In that way, they are going to be able to gain more vocabulary and improve their reading comprehension.

For teachers:

1. Readings and Conversation I teachers should include in their semester more practice of intensive reading and extensive reading, as this would help students improve their reading comprehension.



2. Readings and Conversation I teachers should encourage their students to learn which reading technique they have to use because students have the knowledge of how these techniques can be applied but are not able to identify when to use each one of them.

3. Evaluations for the Readings and Conversation I course should be developed to include questions where all the different reading techniques are to be used, in order to verify students know all of them and they put in practice.

For the institution:

1. The university should encourage more activities where the reading habit is developed, such as book clubs, visits from international authors, a “Read-a-Thon”, etc.

2. The university should invest in a better library for the Department of Foreign Languages, with best seller books and even audiobooks, to encourage students to read.



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ANNEXES



INSTRUMENTS

TEST I

University of El Salvador

School of Arts and Sciences

Department of Foreign Languages



Subject: The usefulness of reading techniques in the development of reading comprehension proficiency of students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015”.

Objective: Analyze the improvement in reading comprehension proficiency developed by the knowledge of reading techniques studied on Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015.

Directions: Please read the following text and circle the answers according to what you have read. When you're done, please return the questionnaire to the closest person in charge.

Part I. Socio-demographic data

1-Gender: a) female b) male

2- Age: a) 18-21 years old b) 22-25 years old c) 26- More years old

3- Occupation: a) only study b) work-study

4- Registration. a. First time b. Second time c. Third time

5- Year of entrance in the University:

a) 2010 b) 2011 c) 2012 d) other

Part II. Reading comprehension

Questions 6-16 are about the following passage.

Line Being able to land safely is a critically important skill for all flying animals. Whereas terrestrial animals face no particular challenge when they need to stop running or crawling, flying animals move at much higher speeds, and they must be careful about how they land. Hitting the ground, or even water, at full flight speed would be quite dangerous. Before
5 touching down, they must decrease their speed in order to land safely. Both bats and birds have mastered the skill of landing, but these two types of flyers go about it quite differently.

In the past it was believed that, in terms of flying mechanics, there was little difference between bats and birds. This belief was based only on assumption, however, because for years nobody had actually studied in graphic detail how bats move their wings. In recent
10 years, though, researchers have discovered a number of interesting facts about bat flight. Bats are built differently from birds, and their wings incorporate both their front and hind limbs. This makes coordinating their limbs more difficult for bats and, as a result, they are not very good at flying over longer distances. However, they are much better at maneuverability: a bat can quickly change its direction of flight or completely reverse it,
15 something a bird cannot easily do.

Another interesting characteristic of bat flight is the way in which bats land—upside down! Unlike birds, which touch down on the ground or on tree branches, bats can be observed flying around and then suddenly hanging upside down from an object overhead. How do they do it? A group of researchers recently used video cameras to film bats landing
20 on nets suspended from the ceiling of their laboratory and studied the recordings in slow motion. They painted spots on the bats' wings to see in detail what happens to the wings in flight and during touchdown. It turns out that the bats flew in a straight line up to the net and then quickly flipped over and attached themselves to it upside down. One downside to this landing routine is that the bats often slam into their landing spot with some force,
25 which probably causes pain. However, not all bats hit their landing spots with the same speed and force; these will vary depending on the area where a bat species makes its home. For example, a cave bat, which regularly perches on a hard stone ceiling, is more careful about its landing preparation than a bat more accustomed to landing in leafy treetops.



6. What is the main topic of the passage?

- (A) Places where flying animals choose to land
- (B) Why scientists have difficulty observing bats
- (C) Differences in the eating habits of bats and birds
- (D) Ways in which bats move differently from birds

7. In line 2, the word terrestrial is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) high-flying
- (B) fast-moving
- (C) tree-climbing
- (D) ground-living

8. According to the passage, what skill is crucial for flying animals?

- (A) Diving underwater
- (B) Slowing down to land
- (C) Flying over great distances
- (D) Balancing on high branches

9. Which of the following is a false assumption about bats that was recently corrected?

- (A) They cannot hear
- (B) They sleep upside down
- (C) They fly similarly to birds
- (D) They hide in tree branches

10. According to the passage, what is an advantage that bats have over birds?

- (A) Bats can land on a greater variety of surfaces
- (B) Bats can turn in the air more quickly
- (C) Bats can eat while flying
- (D) Bats are lighter

11. In line 11, the word incorporate is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) add
- (B) deliver
- (C) include
- (D) discover

12. In line 14, the word it refers to _____.

- (A) bat
- (B) bird
- (C) direction
- (D) maneuverability

13. The researchers used all of the following to study bats EXCEPT _____.

- (A) nets
- (B) paint
- (C) cables
- (D) cameras

14. In line 20, the word suspended is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) hanging
- (B) entering
- (C) falling
- (D) living

15. In line 24, the word slam is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) crash
- (B) bring
- (C) break
- (D) change

16. According to the passage, what helps determine a bat's landing speed?

- (A) What it eats
- (B) How old it is
- (C) How big it is
- (D) Where it lives

Questions 17-24 are about the following passage.

Line Marina Hills High School is fighting pollution in an unusual way. It's planting trees!

5 In an effort to fight pollution and help the environment, the Marina Hills Ecology Club offers free trees to institutions willing to plant them on their grounds. Among those that took advantage of the offer was Marina Hills High School. After consulting

10 with his teachers on where to plant the trees, Principal Max Webb contacted the Ecology Club.

But when the seedlings arrived, Webb had an idea. Instead of planting the young

15 trees in front of the school, he thought it would be better to put them behind the school, where the sun gets very hot in the afternoon.

"It gets so hot inside the building that

20 the students start to sweat during their afternoon classes," said Webb. "Now the shade from our trees will bring them some relief."

25 "There was no argument from the teachers," he added. "When I proposed the idea, everyone said, 'Now why didn't I think of that!'"

The relief won't come until the trees grow taller, but the school will not have to wait long because it requested two species

30 of trees that grow quickly.

"Time is key, and we wanted our trees to get big fast," said Webb. "We were given a wide choice, from shrubs to fruit

35 trees. We requested eucalyptus and willow trees."

Webb said he is also looking forward to finally seeing some wildlife in the school yard at Marina Hills High School.

40 "If all you have is a grass lawn with no trees, you can't expect the local birds to come and visit," said Webb. "They have no place to make their nests. Now that will change, and we'll be able to see birds from

45 our classroom windows."

17. What would be the most appropriate headline for this article?

- (A) Local School Gets Greener
- (B) Student Wins Science Award
- (C) Principal Discovers New Tree
- (D) Teacher Leads Ecological Club that destroy trees

18. What problem does Principal Webb talk about?

- (A) Pollution in the city
- (B) Classrooms that are too hot
- (C) Tall trees that block the view
- (D) Wild animals

19. What did the Ecology Club do for Marina Hills High School?

- (A) It helped design the school yard.
- (B) It put flowers in the classrooms.
- (C) It sold seeds to the school.
- (D) It provided free trees.

20. In line 13, the word seedlings is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) bird nests
- (B) young trees
- (C) packages of seeds
- (D) members of a club

21. What decision was changed?

- (A) Which trees should be dug up
- (B) When the old trees should be cut down
- (C) Where the new trees should be planted
- (D) Which type of tree should be chosen

22. In line 22, the word them refers to _____.

- (A) trees
- (B) classes
- (C) students
- (D) teachers

23. What can be inferred from the article about eucalyptus and willow trees?

- (A) They grow quickly.
- (B) They become extremely tall.
- (C) They are less expensive than fruit trees.
- (D) They do not grow flowers in the springtime.

24. What does Principal Webb imply about the local birds?

- (A) They make their nests on the ground.
- (B) They are not often seen at the school.
- (C) There are fewer of them due to the pollution problem.
- (D) They fly into the classrooms when the windows are open.

TEST II

University of El Salvador
School of Arts and Sciences
Department of Foreign Languages



Subject: The usefulness of reading techniques in the development of reading comprehension proficiency of students from Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015”.

Objective: Analyze the improvement in reading comprehension proficiency developed by the knowledge of reading techniques studied on Readings and Conversation I course at the Department of Foreign Languages of the University of El Salvador during the year 2015.

Directions: Please read the following text and circle the answers according to what you have read. When you're done, please return the questionnaire to the closest person in charge.

Part I. Socio-demographic data

1-Gender: a) female b) male

2- Age: a) 18-21 years old b) 22-25 years old c) 26- More years old

3- Occupation: a) only study b) work-study

4- Registration. a. First time b. Second time c. Third time

5- Year of entrance in the University:

a) 2010 b) 2011 c) 2012 d) other

Part II. Reading comprehension

Questions 6-16 are about the following passage.

Line Being able to land safely is a critically important skill for all flying animals. Whereas terrestrial animals face no particular challenge when they need to stop running or crawling, flying animals move at much higher speeds, and they must be careful about how they land. Hitting the ground, or even water, at full flight speed would be quite dangerous. Before
5 touching down, they must decrease their speed in order to land safely. Both bats and birds have mastered the skill of landing, but these two types of flyers go about it quite differently.

In the past it was believed that, in terms of flying mechanics, there was little difference between bats and birds. This belief was based only on assumption, however, because for years nobody had actually studied in graphic detail how bats move their wings. In recent
10 years, though, researchers have discovered a number of interesting facts about bat flight. Bats are built differently from birds, and their wings incorporate both their front and hind limbs. This makes coordinating their limbs more difficult for bats and, as a result, they are not very good at flying over longer distances. However, they are much better at maneuverability: a bat can quickly change its direction of flight or completely reverse it,
15 something a bird cannot easily do.

Another interesting characteristic of bat flight is the way in which bats land—upside down! Unlike birds, which touch down on the ground or on tree branches, bats can be observed flying around and then suddenly hanging upside down from an object overhead. How do they do it? A group of researchers recently used video cameras to film bats landing
20 on nets suspended from the ceiling of their laboratory and studied the recordings in slow motion. They painted spots on the bats' wings to see in detail what happens to the wings in flight and during touchdown. It turns out that the bats flew in a straight line up to the net and then quickly flipped over and attached themselves to it upside down. One downside to this landing routine is that the bats often slam into their landing spot with some force,
25 which probably causes pain. However, not all bats hit their landing spots with the same speed and force; these will vary depending on the area where a bat species makes its home. For example, a cave bat, which regularly perches on a hard stone ceiling, is more careful about its landing preparation than a bat more accustomed to landing in leafy treetops.



6. What is the main topic of the passage?

- (A) Places where flying animals choose to land
- (B) Why scientists have difficulty observing bats
- (C) Differences in the eating habits of bats and birds
- (D) Ways in which bats move differently from birds

7. In line 2, the word *terrestrial* is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) high-flying
- (B) fast-moving
- (C) tree-climbing
- (D) ground-living

8. According to the passage, what skill is crucial for flying animals?

- (A) Diving underwater
- (B) Slowing down to land
- (C) Flying over great distances
- (D) Balancing on high branches

9. Which of the following is a false assumption about bats that was recently corrected?

- (A) They cannot hear
- (B) They sleep upside down
- (C) They fly similarly to birds
- (D) They hide in tree branches

10. According to the passage, what is an advantage that bats have over birds?

- (A) Bats can land on a greater variety of surfaces
- (B) Bats can turn in the air more quickly
- (C) Bats can eat while flying
- (D) Bats are lighter

11. In line 11, the word *incorporate* is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) add
- (B) deliver
- (C) include
- (D) discover

12. In line 14, the word *it* refers to _____.

- (A) bat
- (B) bird
- (C) direction
- (D) maneuverability

13. The researchers used all of the following to study bats EXCEPT _____.

- (A) nets
- (B) paint
- (C) cables
- (D) cameras

14. In line 20, the word suspended is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) hanging
- (B) entering
- (C) falling
- (D) living

15. In line 24, the word slam is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) crash
- (B) bring
- (C) break
- (D) change

16. According to the passage, what helps determine a bat's landing speed?

- (A) What it eats
- (B) How old it is
- (C) How big it is
- (D) Where it lives

Questions 17-24 are about the following passage.

Line Marina Hills High School is fighting pollution in an unusual way. It's planting trees!

5 In an effort to fight pollution and help the environment, the Marina Hills Ecology Club offers free trees to institutions willing to plant them on their grounds. Among those that took advantage of the offer was Marina Hills High School. After consulting

10 with his teachers on where to plant the trees, Principal Max Webb contacted the Ecology Club.

But when the seedlings arrived, Webb had an idea. Instead of planting the young

15 trees in front of the school, he thought it would be better to put them behind the school, where the sun gets very hot in the afternoon.

"It gets so hot inside the building that

20 the students start to sweat during their afternoon classes," said Webb. "Now the shade from our trees will bring them some relief."

25 "There was no argument from the teachers," he added. "When I proposed the idea, everyone said, 'Now why didn't I think of that!'"

The relief won't come until the trees grow taller, but the school will not have to wait long because it requested two species

30 of trees that grow quickly.

"Time is key, and we wanted our trees to get big fast," said Webb. "We were given a wide choice, from shrubs to fruit

35 trees. We requested eucalyptus and willow trees."

Webb said he is also looking forward to finally seeing some wildlife in the school yard at Marina Hills High School.

40 "If all you have is a grass lawn with no trees, you can't expect the local birds to come and visit," said Webb. "They have no place to make their nests. Now that will change, and we'll be able to see birds from

45 our classroom windows."

17. What would be the most appropriate headline for this article?

- (A) Local School Gets Greener
- (B) Student Wins Science Award
- (C) Principal Discovers New Tree
- (d) Teachers Leads Ecological Club

18. What problem does Principal Webb talk about?

- (A) Pollution in the city
- (B) Classrooms that are too hot
- (C) Tall trees that block the view
- (D) Wild animals that destroy trees

19. What did the Ecology Club do for Marina Hills High School?

- (A) It helped design the school yard.
- (B) It put flowers in the classrooms.
- (C) It sold seeds to the school.
- (D) It provided free trees.

20. In line 13, the word seedlings is closest in meaning to _____.

- (A) bird nests
- (B) young trees
- (C) packages of seeds
- (D) members of a club

21. What decision was changed?

- (A) Which trees should be dug up
- (B) When the old trees should be cut down
- (C) Where the new trees should be planted
- (D) Which type of tree should be chosen

22. In line 22, the word them refers to _____.

- (A) trees
- (B) classes
- (C) students
- (D) teachers

23. What can be inferred from the article about eucalyptus and willow trees?

- (A) They grow quickly.
- (B) They become extremely tall.
- (C) They are less expensive than fruit trees.
- (D) They do not grow flowers in the springtime.

24. What does Principal Webb imply about the local birds?

- (A) They make their nests on the ground.
- (B) They are not often seen at the school.
- (C) There are fewer of them due to the pollution problem.
- (D) They fly into the classrooms when the windows are open.

Part III Reading techniques questionnaire

25. What are the reading techniques you used for these readings?

- (A) Skimming
- (B) Scanning
- (C) Decoding
- (E) Intensive reading
- (F) Extensive reading
- (G) Other

26. Reading techniques are useful for you to...

- (A) General Knowledge
- (B) Read faster
- (C) Comprehend the reading better

27. Do you feel that reading techniques are helping you to become better in English?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

28. Did you feel the need to look in the dictionary for a word to comprehend the readings?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

29. Would you continue to use the reading techniques for other subjects?

- (A) Yes
- (B) No

TIMETABLE

Activities	June 2015	July 2015	August 2015	September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015	January 2016	February 2016	March 2016	April 2016	May 2016	June 2016	July 2016	August 2016	September 2016	October 2016	November 2016	December 2016	January 2017	February 2017	
Research topic approval																						
Advisor assignment																						
Elaboration of the research profile																						
Presentation of the research profile																						
Elaboration of the theoretical framework																						
Calculation of the sample																						
Elaboration of the data gathering instrument																						
Implementation of the final instrument																						
Creation of the data base																						
Analysis of data collected.																						
Elaboration of the final conclusions of the research																						
Formulation of final recommendations																						
Final revision of the research work																						
First presentation of the final report																						
Final presentation date assignment																						
Final presentation of the research work																						

