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We are glad to present the *ARTESOL ESP Journal issue n°2*. It includes original studies and analyses in ESP that constitute significant contributions to the understanding and/or improvement of educational processes and outcomes. It publishes research papers representing a wide range of academic issues and using different research methods. We hope this refereed publication will play a major role in rethinking the discipline and that it will encourage ESP teachers to participate in coming issues.

The editorial board of the *ARTESOL ESP Journal* would like to thank Iliana Martínez, MA, Universidad Nacional de Río Cuarto, for her contribution to this journal, and Susana Tuero, PhD, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata, María Eugenia Orce de Roig, PhD, Universidad Nacional de Tucumán, and Lidia Aguirre de Quevedo, MA, Universidad Nacional de Catamarca, for their expertise referate.

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## ARTESOLESP E-journal, Volume 2, No 1

### **Content**

#### **Page 1**

- ❖ **Message from ARTESOLESP E-journal Director**

#### **Page 2**

- ❖ Organization of ARTESOLESP E-journal
- ❖ ARTESOLESP's Message
- ❖ Members of the Editorial Board

#### **Page 3 - 5**

- ❖ Iliana A. MARTÍNEZ, "English for Academic Purposes in Latin America: Advantages of the Context"

#### **Page 6 - 12**

- ❖ Viviana INNOCENTINI; Ana FORTE; Susana TUERO PhD; Claudia BRUNO, "Impact of Poor L2 Command on Metalinguistic Compensatory Sources"

#### **Page 12 - 38**

- ❖ María Florencia STOCK, "Building Main Idea Comprehension in FL University Students: Problems & Causes"

#### **Page 39 - 49**

- ❖ María Susana GONZÁLEZ; María Claudia ALBINI; Ana María ROCCA, "Difficulties in EFL abstract reading in the social sciences"

#### **Page 50**

- ❖ **ARTESOL ESP E-journal - Submission guidelines**

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## English for Academic Purposes in Latin America: Advantages of the Context

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### Introduction

English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has evolved in the last two decades to help students and researchers use English in a variety of academic contexts and communicative situations, be they spoken or written, depending on the particular needs and communicative purposes (Hyland, 2006). As EAP is taught in different parts of the world, it is the particular characteristics of the different contexts what determines the type of instruction that must be offered. In this regard, Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) have identified four different contexts based on the language in which the courses are taught. The first of these contexts is the situation where international students use English in English-speaking countries, as the United Kingdom, the United States or Australia. The second involves countries where all education is offered in English, but in everyday life the local mother tongue is used, as occurs in Hong Kong, Singapore and Zimbabwe. The third case is that of places where some courses in tertiary education are taught in English, particularly in disciplines such as engineering, medicine, and science, as is the case of Jordan. The fourth situation has been defined as that where all education is offered in the native language of the country and English is considered to be an auxiliary language. This last includes the case of Latin American countries, such as Brazil and Argentina. As the first three situations are characterized by the fact that the language of instruction is English, we will identify these contexts as situations where English is used as a Second Language (ESL) for the purposes of this article. In the fourth case, English is used as a Foreign Language, and then we will refer to this as the EFL situation (Martínez, 2011).

Of these different EAP contexts, those where English is a foreign language (EFL) have been considered to be the most disadvantaged. Particularly, the lack of exposure to native speakers of English and the lack of contact with users of the

language have been thought to constitute a major drawback for students using academic language. However, a recent article describing the Latin American situation (Martínez, 2011) has pointed out some advantageous aspects for the teaching of EAP in this particular EFL context. The study highlights the relevance of some of the EFL contextual characteristics that facilitate the use of English for scientific communication. The author takes as point of departure the four EAP contexts identified by Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998). In her paper, Martínez (2011) focuses on some aspects of the EFL situation, highlighting those that distinguish Latin America from ESL contexts. The most salient differences observed are a) the possibility of field homogeneity in EAP courses, b) the Latin American L1 background, c) the highly specific needs of the students, and d) the fact that the practitioners are non-native speakers of English. These characteristics are described as advantages that may be capitalized on, so as to favour the teaching of EAP. The next part of this paper will develop in detail these contextual characteristics and their specific advantages for teaching EAP courses in the Latin American context.

### Field homogeneity

In Latin America English is offered in courses both in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. They are mandatory courses which are offered for each program, thus the students share a particular field of study. This characteristic of the educational system in relation to EAP in most of Latin America provides the possibility of having field-homogeneous groups, considered to be ideal for the development of specific instruction (Hyland, 2002). In Argentina, for example, most undergraduate programs include reading courses for different careers, such as English for medicine, English for veterinary medicine, English for agriculture, or English for economics. This situation is different from ESL situations, where EAP courses are offered to students who come from a variety of programs, making it extremely difficult to group students from related fields. This situation is exemplified by a course described by Swales and Lindemann (2002), where students from the

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humanities shared the course with students from other fields, such as social sciences, biological and health sciences, physical sciences and engineering. Another example is provided by a course described by Hyon (2001), which was taught to students pursuing degrees in fields as different as engineering, nursing, anthropology, and economics. These examples speak of a situation that may be culturally rich, but in which much of what the individual learners need must be relegated. In our courses one major advantage related to field homogeneity that we have observed is that it allows for the use of highly specific materials. Specific materials facilitate the students' participation and reduce lexical problems, as the learners are familiar with the topics dealt with. Further, the students' disciplinary background knowledge has a central role in their active participation in the discussion of the texts, which contain information that they are familiar with.

#### **Latinate L1 background**

The two major languages spoken in Latin America are Portuguese and Spanish, both being of Latin origin. It is well known that the English language was greatly influenced by Latinate languages, both in the areas of administration and science. Thus, most scientific terms in English can be expected to be cognates of Spanish and Portuguese. This similarity allows practitioners to make the best of the learners' intuitive knowledge of their first language, an advantage that contrasts with the ESL situation, where EAP students come from heterogeneous language backgrounds. In such ESL contexts, the possibility of capitalizing on the students' knowledge of their first language is hindered by the differences that their respective L1s may have. On the other hand, in the Latin American context, the linguistic similarity between the local languages and English for science clearly contributes to reducing the burden of vocabulary learning.

#### **Highly specific needs**

The students that participate in EAP courses in Latin American countries are usually advanced in their academic careers and have very specific and urgent needs. Thus it is possible, and practical, to concentrate on

one particular teaching goal at a time, such as focusing on a single skill. In general, EAP courses in Latin America are not usually concerned with the spoken skills. In fact, they mainly focalize on the written skills, and in general they develop reading in undergraduate courses and writing in postgraduate courses as the students' most immediate needs are related to reading and/or writing in English to meet the requirements of their specific careers. In ESL contexts, on the other hand, EAP students' needs are extremely varied. These include oral skills, such as tutorials, seminar discussions and doctoral oral defences, administrative documents, and research genres such as journal articles, conference papers and grant proposals (Hyland, 2006). The specificity of needs in Latin America situation calls for specific instruction. Hence, practitioners may be expected to have deep knowledge of only the restricted set of genres required, specific instruction also favours the learners, as they concentrate only on the genres that their programs require.

#### **NNES practitioners**

In Latin American contexts, and particularly in Argentina, it is unusual to find native English speakers, and even less teachers that are native speakers of English. Thus, most, if not all, practitioners in universities and academic centers are native speakers of a Latinate language, which is the same language of the learners. Hence, non-native practitioners are the norm. It must be noted that there are reports of problems of credibility and discrimination against non-native teachers of English in some parts of the world, specifically in English-speaking countries (Thomas, 1999). However, non-native English-speaking teachers working in non-English-language countries where the medium of university instruction is the English language do not seem to have conflictive situations. In these countries, according to Hyland (2006), these academics perform their jobs without concern about their being native or non-native user of English. In the Latin American context there is no such conflict as the general expectation is that the teachers will be local teachers. The practitioners' advantages of being local and

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sharing the same language with the students translate in a proximity with the students that allows practitioners to select those aspects of the language that are clearly problematic for the speakers of Latin American languages, thus maximizing the course time.

### Conclusion

Despite all the advantages mentioned above, and the great demand for writing instruction that there is in this part of the world, the development of EAP in Latin America has been extremely slow, particularly in relation to academic writing. There are only a few authors that report on courses that offer academic writing for graduate students and researchers, such as Grimaldi (2012) and Martínez (2002). We also know informally about other writing courses that are taught in Argentina, but, as far as we know, they are only concerned with the teaching of how to write abstracts. Still, despite the absence of formal teaching, our researchers have managed to succeed in publishing their findings in central, prestigious journals, as attested by the reports of CAICYT (Centro Argentino de Información Científica y Tecnológica), an official Argentinean centre providing scientific information based on the Science Citation Index (SCI). We have not yet carried out formal research to find out how scholars at our university manage to build their articles. What we know about them comes from our experience and contact with them. In my fifteen-year experience teaching academic writing, I have had in my courses senior researchers, most of whom had carried out postgraduate studies in English-speaking countries and had learnt about the art of writing research in those contexts. But the majority of my students are novel researchers and doctoral candidates with no experience abroad, who must learn how to write in English by actively participating in the construction of their papers in cooperation with their thesis supervisors (Lave & Wenger, 1991). It is this last group that most needs instruction in academic English. If we, EAP practitioners, develop courses that capitalize on the advantages of our context and on the vast knowledge that EAP has produced to help non-Anglophone scholars, it will be possible

to imagine a much more promissory future for Latin American researchers.

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## Impact of Poor L2 Command on Metalinguistic Compensatory Sources

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### ABSTRACT

Several researchers suggest that topic familiarity, text format recognition, and the use of other overtly taught metalinguistic strategies aid the reading process and work as compensatory facilitators of comprehending. This research study was designed to examine whether students taking English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses disregard the use of all the compensatory sources available and tend to over rely on their "deficient" L2 command instead. Data from this study indicated that overt instruction did not influence the students' use of compensatory strategies. Learners showed a tendency to depend on bottom-up reading processes and only to resort to a limited number of strategies involving direct interaction with the text. Pre and post reading strategies were not generally considered as valuable tools to achieve full understanding of field-specific texts. Further research is needed to identify possible reasons for students not profiting from such strategies, and to determine what could be done to foster their conscious use.

**Keywords:** metalinguistic strategies – reading comprehension – ESP – overt strategy instruction – compensatory sources

### INTRODUCTION

University students and professionals alike, in non-English-speaking countries, must read field-specific texts for several academic and professional purposes. The difficulties such task poses for individuals whose proficiency in English is relatively low, is undeniable. For this reason, English for Specific Purpose (ESP) courses have become part of the University curricula, with the intention of aiding learners to develop reading comprehension skills in the target language. With such aim in mind, teachers of ESP courses have drawn upon research findings regarding the usefulness of strategy instruction to organize their syllabi and prepare their courses. In general terms, learning strategies can be defined as techniques, principles, or rules that enable students to learn to solve problems, complete tasks independently, and increase their reading comprehension (Mercer & Mercer, 1998). Although research on this area is non-conclusive, instruction on the use of strategies is widely seen as an effective pedagogical means to promote language development. It has been stated that previously unsuccessful English language students will become effective learners as a result of strategy training (Chamot & O'Malley, 1984; Deshler & Schumaker, 1986; Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000).

The usefulness of reading strategies as well as meta-cognitive awareness in reading comprehension has been highlighted by several authors (Casanave, 1988; Chamot & O'Malley, 1996; Mokhtari & Sheory, 2008; Paris, Wasik, & Tuner, 1996). A study carried out with students reading in Arabic, English or French as foreign languages showed that the perceived use of reading strategies was similar, despite the foreign language difference (Mokhtari, 2008). In a study of postgraduate students and their approach to reading, Joyce Bell (2008) suggests that it is framing what aids reading comprehension. The author draws on Reid's premise that "appropriate interpretation presupposes an ability to recognize the framing devices (mainly linguistic) which convey meta messages" (Reid, 1996:92). MacLachlan and Reid (1994) describe four types of

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framing: extra-textual framing, which is the use of background knowledge and experience to assist in the interpretation of a text; intra-textual framing, which involves the utilization of cues, such as headings, and other elements within a text, such as cohesive devices, in order to interpret it; circumtextual framing, which concerns the use of peripheral elements such as the cover of a journal, title and abstract to get the gist of the text; and finally, inter-textual framing, which is the connection established between the present reading and previously read texts to assist comprehension.

When classifying reading comprehension strategies, further distinctions can be made depending on their nature. Leaving aside the affective and interactive domain which influences reading performance in a foreign language, strategies can also be differentiated according to whether they are cognitive or meta-cognitive in nature (Chamot 1987; Oxford, 1990). Whereas the former normally involve the identification, storage, and retrieval of words, phrases, and other target language elements, the latter correspond to pre-assessment and pre-planning, and evaluation and post-evaluation of language learning activities. Despite such theoretical attempt to distinguish them, both types of strategies actually overlap.

Regardless of the different terms used to identify learning strategies, research findings clearly suggest overt instruction on the recognition and use of strategies far beyond the linguistic arena help reading comprehension. It is expected, then, that the teacher identifies specific strategies which are likely to be relevant for the given learners in the given educational context, and integrates such strategies into foreign language instruction (Weaver & Cohen, 1994). As far as reading is concerned, it has been claimed that by raising students' awareness of metalinguistic features, they can approach a written text in such a way that comprehension is not only aided but greatly facilitated (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994; Diaz, 1983; Mokhtari, 2008; Peal & Lambert, 1962).

According to previous research findings, L2 reading comprehension goes far beyond the understanding of individual words or even syntax regulations in the second / foreign language. As Jixian Pang (2008) claims, readers' abilities can be described in terms of three dimensions: linguistic (formal knowledge of vocabulary, syntax and discourse, and the ability to use this knowledge in interaction with texts), cognitive (the use of prior knowledge and various strategies in an effort to construct meaning) and metacognitive (the monitoring and control of reading strategies). These dimensions will eventually interact during the reading process. That is to say, reading in a FL is a dynamic process, during which learners make use of a variety of skills and strategies, combined with background knowledge, L1-related knowledge and real-world knowledge to arrive at an understanding of written material (Aebersold and Field, 1997: IX). As Bernhardt (2005) claims in her compensatory model of L2 reading, there should be knowledge sources other than purely linguistic L2 sources to assist either deficient or nonexistent areas of knowledge in order to achieve full understanding of the text. Topic familiarity, format recognition and the use of other metalinguistic strategies have been said to aid reading comprehension and to work as compensatory facilitators.

Based on theoretical evidence regarding the effectiveness those strategies have in aiding the reading comprehension processes, the ESP course offered for students majoring in Agricultural Sciences at Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias, has systematically included students' training on the use of strategies. Such a practice was expected to help students with a poor L2 command develop their ability to use metalinguistic elements that would compensate for their deficient knowledge. The reading strategies used throughout the course can be grouped under three categories. First, learners' awareness is raised about the usefulness of background knowledge and topic familiarity to assist the reading comprehension process. According to Alsheik (2011), activating prior knowledge has been identified as a major factor promoting comprehension. Second, the characteristic format of scientific texts and their most salient elements should be identified. In Schema theory, background knowledge can be divided into 'content schematic knowledge' (knowledge about the content area) and 'formal schematic knowledge' (rhetorical

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functions such as genre, format recognition), both of which are claimed to aid the comprehension of a given text (Carrell, 1983). Finally, other metalinguistic strategies (i.e. deriving meaning from context and from cognates) are introduced and further integrated into the overall training.

Despite the strong claims put forward regarding the existence of a direct relationship between the use of metalinguistic strategies and a successful performance in reading comprehension, there might be reasons to believe that the learners' command of the foreign language affects the use of such strategies. More precisely, it is believed that despite the compensatory sources which would ideally be available after receiving appropriate training, students whose L2 command is poor will depend on bottom up processes of reading and translation, disregarding any other metalinguistic sources. Studies by Jimenez *et al.* (1995, 1996) and Malcolm (2009), suggest that translation is evident for less proficient readers when they read in their second language. The purpose of this study was to examine whether there is a tendency for students who lack a solid command of L2 towards an over reliance on their deficient L2, despite the possible compensatory sources available.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

Subjects for this study were 65 students majoring in Agricultural Sciences at Facultad de Ciencias Agrarias, Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata. All the learners were attending the compulsory sixteen-week-long ESP course whose objective is to promote reading comprehension of academic field-specific texts. Out of the total number of students, 48.77% were within the first and second year of studies (*ciclo básico*) when sampled, while 51.23% were taking their third year onwards (*ciclo superior*). On average, 56.08%, 17.06%, and 26.82% of the learners had already passed from 1 to 10, from 11 to 20, or more than 21 field-specific courses, respectively, before registering for the ESP course. The only prior exposure to the target language in 82.93% of the individuals sampled corresponded to the nine years of compulsory foreign language instruction in Argentina (from the fourth year of primary school to the last one of secondary school in public and private institutions alike); the remaining 17.07 % of the students had attended English classes at private language institutes or bilingual schools. Results from a diagnostic test on prior L2 command indicated that those students who had only attended compulsory classes at public or private schools had a poor L2 command. On the other hand, those who had attended classes at private language institutes or bilingual schools had a more solid L2 command. Although the data provided by both groups above were considered in this exploratory study, further research will be carried out in order to evaluate and compare whether such difference in the learners' prior L2 command influences the use of strategies.

### **Materials**

The instruments for data for this study were a socio-demographic questionnaire, the *Cuestionario de Estrategias de Lectura en Inglés – CELI* (Ramírez & Pereira, 2006) previously adapted from the Survey of Reading Strategies– SORS (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002), and the *Inventario Sobre Estrategias Metacognitivas*, translated by Martínez Fernandez, R. (2001) from the original version O'Neil, H. F., & Abedi, J. (1996). Following the author's suggestions, data obtained from the CELI were grouped into three main categories for the analysis of the results. Items 1, 5, 8, 9, 17, 18, 21 and 22 were considered global strategies. Items 4, 6, 11, 13, 19, 23 and 24 were taken as problem solving strategies. The remaining items were interpreted as support/aid strategies.

### **Procedures**

Data were gathered at two stages. First, learners were introduced to and instructed on the use of metalinguistic strategies to aid the reading comprehension process. Students were trained in the use of strategies during the first six weeks of the ESP course. Along such period, strategies to

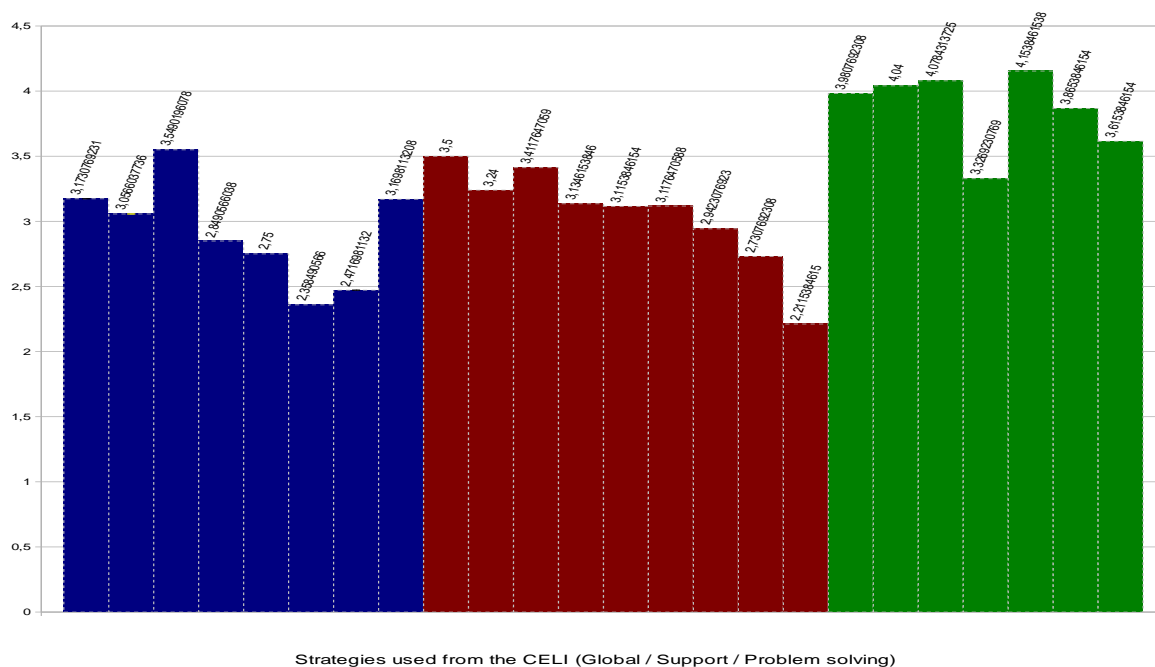


compensate for a deficient L2 command were presented, recalled, exemplified and practiced. In addition, at the end of each reading comprehension task, the learners' metacognitive awareness was raised in an attempt to foster the analysis of their own reading processes and of the strategies that were or could have been used. Finally, once the training period was over, students were asked to complete a reading comprehension task; after the completion of the task, both the CELI and the Inventario sobre Estrategias Cognitivas were administered in order to gather insights regarding the actual use of metalinguistic and metacognitive strategies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results from the CELI were interpreted following the author's classification into global, problem solving, and aid/support strategies. Overall, the students' use of metalinguistic strategies can be considered medium (3,24) according to the standards proposed by Ramirez and Pereira to interpret the responses to the questionnaire. At first sight, it is clear that the most frequently used strategies were those comprised into the problem solving group (3,86). Next, the support/aid group showed an average of 3,04 and global strategies presented an average of 2,92 on the scale (table 1).

Although the responses to all the strategies were within the medium standards, an apparent difference is easily perceived among them. Students seem to use much more frequently those strategies that have to do with actions and procedures the reader resorts to while directly working with the text in order to aid comprehension. On the other hand, the least frequently used ones are those deliberately planned in advance in order to help them monitor and manage their own comprehension.



Concerning the most widely used metalinguistic strategies analyzed in this study, re-reading seems to be the best alternative to cope with a 'difficult' text (4,15). Within this group the use of supporting material such as dictionaries was reported as the least used strategy (3,33). Such information clearly contradicts the reality observed during the development of classes and even examinations since students are allowed to use such materials to complete their tasks as well as their exams. Moreover, what is constantly perceived is the opposite, an overuse of the dictionary to assist them when approaching texts.

Support/aid strategies represent the second group of tools selected by the learners when approaching any field-specific text in the second language. From those strategies considered in this group, taking down notes while reading was found to be the strategy students seemed to prefer (3,5), whereas making themselves questions they would like to have answered from the text was the least frequently used as reported by the learners on the CELI (2,21). From this data, it may be interpreted that students seem to prefer those strategies put into practice at the moment of reading, to the ones they could have used before the actual reading to anticipate and facilitate the understanding.

The last group in order of preference was that which contains global strategies. Prediction was reported as the least adopted tool (2,36). Adjusting reading pace to the perceived degree of difficulty was found to be the most widely used strategy within this group (3,55). Consistent with what was stated above, students do not seem to approach the text through the use of anticipatory strategies.

A different way to analyze this information is to look into the use of those strategies at different moments during the reading process, that is pre, while and post-reading. Although the authors of this questionnaire did not design the CELI to measure what students do in these three moments, all the strategies presented can be reclassified depending on when they should be effectively used. Items 1, 5, 18 and 20 would correspond to pre-reading strategies; Item number 21 on the CELI would be generally considered as a post-reading strategy. The remaining items in the questionnaire would be used while directly interacting with the written piece of discourse.

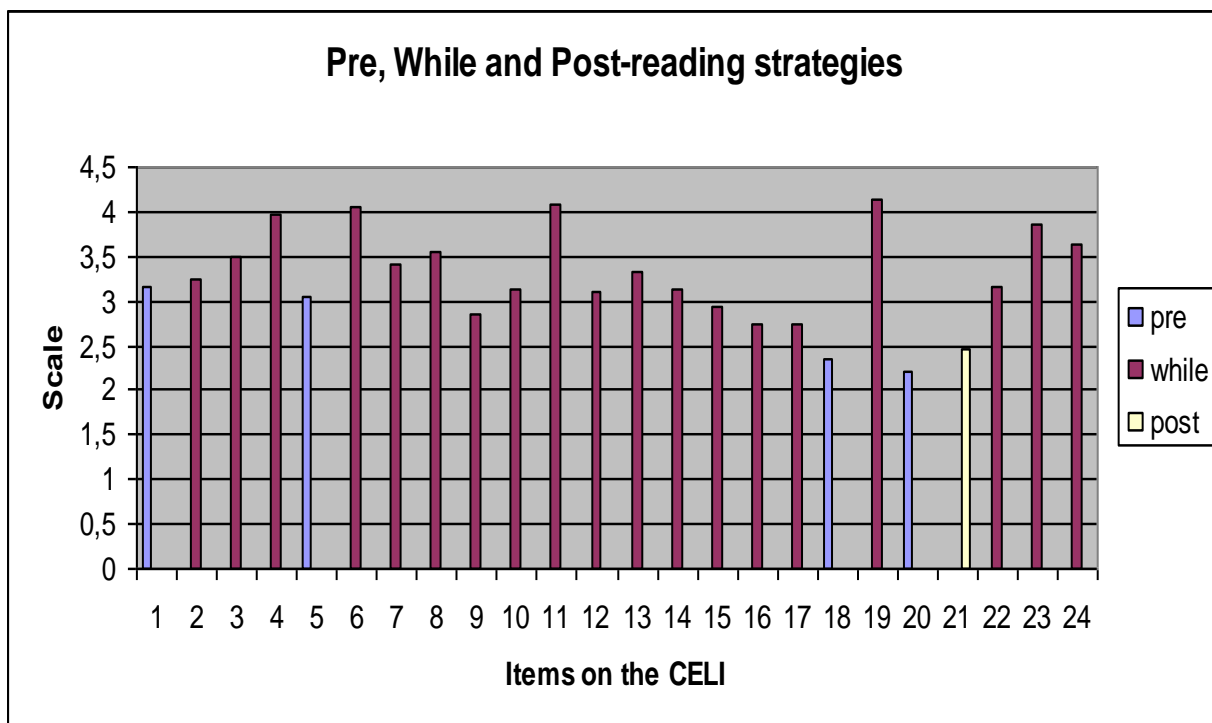


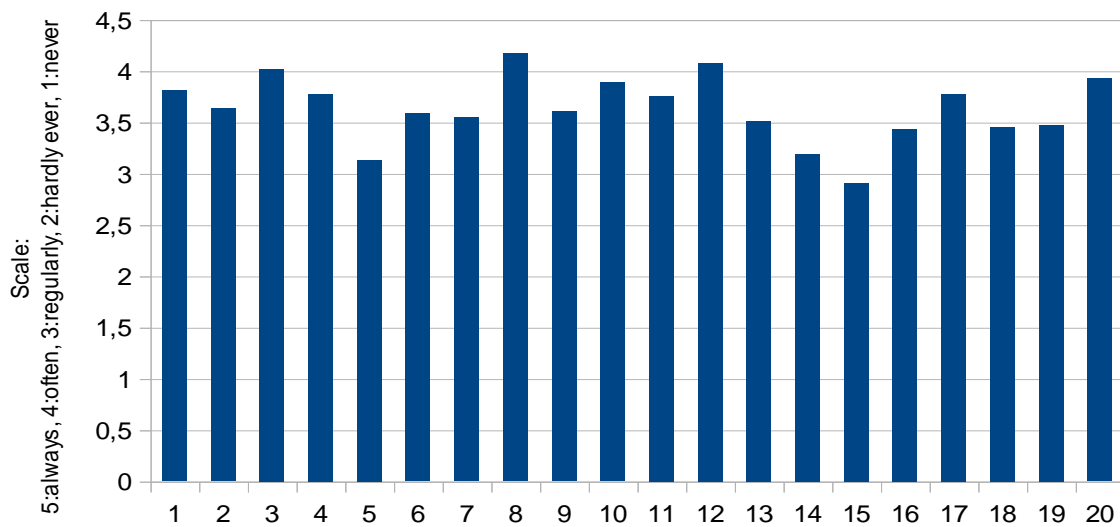
Table 2: Students' use of pre, while and post-reading strategies on the CELI

Table 2 illustrates the strategies on the CELI corresponding to each of the moments mentioned above. Such data would indicate that those strategies related to predicting (items 18 and 20) and checking predictions (21) are rarely used according to the responses provided by the students. In contrast, the most salient strategies chosen by the students are those that involve either slowing down (items 4 and 11, with an average of 3.98 and 4.08, respectively) or rereading (items 19 – 4.15- and 6 -4.04) the text to improve their understanding of it at the "while-reading stage". In

addition to adjusting the timing, students seem to rely on bottom-up processes next. This can be observed from item 23 (3.86) which involves the translation of isolated words or phrases disregarding their linguistic context.

As regards the second instrument utilized for data collection, findings surprisingly indicate that students resort to and reflect on their metacognition when completing a reading task (table 3). In this case, the most frequently used strategies are those related to having a thorough understanding of the task itself (item 12 with an average of 4.07) and trying to complete it successfully (item 8 scoring 4.17 as average). An interesting finding obtained from the responses to this *Inventario de Estrategias Metacognitivas* was that students seem to lack awareness of the possible alternative pathways available when completing a task (item 5 – 3.13). As a result, students cannot approach tasks from different perspectives or using varying thinking processes (15 – 2.90).

### Use of Metacognitive Strategies



Metacognitive Strategies in the *Inventario de Estrategias Metacognitivas*

Table 3: Students' use of metacognitive strategies in the *Inventario de Estrategias Metacognitivas* (Martinez Fernandez, 2001)

### CONCLUSION

Data analysis was expected to indicate that the poorer the L2 command, the lower the conscious use of compensatory strategies, and the higher the reliance on the foreign language would be on the part of the learners, despite having received overt instruction. Results obtained from both questionnaires partially coincide with these expectations. Students' answers seem to indicate that they have a strong tendency to overuse those strategies activated at the moment of interacting with the texts, mainly those involving bottom-up processes, while disregarding those that may anticipate content and, thus, facilitate understanding. Furthermore, students do not seem to make any use of post-reading strategies, such as checking inferences. This fact might be tightly related to the learners' lack of anticipatory questions, content-related predictions or conscious retrieval of background knowledge on the topic. The data on the use of strategies in the different steps of the reading process should be analyzed in future research projects since the

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instruments used in the current study were not designed to gather and analyze information from this perspective. So, further research should be carried out in order to achieve a deeper understanding of the actual use of other alternative pre and post-reading strategies and how to guide students into a more efficient use of them.

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## Building Main Idea Comprehension in FL University Students: Problems & Causes

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### **ABSTRACT**

Foreign language university students frequently complain about the difficulty of building the main idea from academic texts written in English. This study involved 40 students attending the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires. The aim of this work is to analyze what causes those difficulties that come up when constructing a main idea: low English proficiency, poor reading comprehension skills, or poor main idea building skills. Results support Cummins' Threshold Hypothesis, whereby reading ability transfer is only possible after a threshold level of L2/FL proficiency has been attained for skilled L1 readers to keep their competence while reading in L2/FL. Although this finding implies the significance of FL proficiency for main idea building, this research proves that direct training in the use of strategies can help students override the threshold factor.

**Keywords:** Main idea - language proficiency – strategy – threshold factor – reading skills

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the past two decades, research on the strategies used for main idea building (MIB) by non-native speakers of English has attracted the interest of researchers because it has been considered that students' ability to build main ideas is a vital skill required for learning successfully. Cannon (2008) claims that the ability to build main ideas not only demonstrates comprehension but also fosters learning. It enables students to work independently by using what Richards and Lockhart (1994:60) call "analytical strategies" that maximize effective learning, such as the ability to question the information in the text and separate the core from details.

At university level, the development of the ability to read academic texts is particularly significant since it is a way to gain access to information, and consequently to produce knowledge. The fact that English is the "language of knowledge" (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2005) makes reading in English an essential skill. Because MIB is a skill that every university student is supposed to have already mastered, it could be assumed that despite the complexities of dealing with a text written in a foreign language, university students should not have difficulties in building the main idea from academic texts. However, contrary to expectations, they present problems when dealing with this task.

At the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires, students are expected to pass three levels of reading-comprehension in English. These courses do not focus on teaching English but on teaching strategic reading since it is considered that the main aim of reading at university is not only to learn but also to integrate information from different sources.

MIB is a tool that facilitates abstraction and assists students in their information recall. As such it is not only used to foster comprehension but to test students' understanding of academic texts. My research on MIB comes up from two major concerns. First, students tend to be hesitant when

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faced with large masses of textual material to read. They find it difficult to synthesize information, and they usually think that everything that has been written is important. Therefore, they tend not to ignore or omit irrelevant information. The second motivating factor arises from my concern about what makes the task of MIB so problematic, a question we should ask ourselves in order to be able to help students to overcome such difficulties.

The first aim of the study is to find out what kind of strategies is used for academic text main idea building. This is important because strategies are steps taken by students to accomplish a given task. Due to their intrinsic features, strategies pave the way for academic achievement. The ultimate purpose of studying strategies for MIB is to incorporate them into the regular teaching of English at university level. Basing instruction on our understanding of the strategies students use to process information may help them reach their academic needs. Accordingly, providing the necessary tools would enable students to interact in any academic situation. Secondly, new knowledge should start from what students *are doing* rather than from what they *should be doing*. This might help us move away from the stereotypical notions of those problems students may face during the learning process. If we know the cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies that students use to detect the main ideas in a text, teachers could build on them so that students can gain access to techniques that are crucial for language problem solving.

Following Anderson & Krathwohl (2009), the information processing skills which are taught at university level to foreign language speakers not only entail the use of strategies but also *knowledge, comprehension* and *creation*. The *knowledge* aspect refers to the language proficiency required for understanding a text (vocabulary, grammar, discourse, etc.); the *comprehension* aspect is the understanding or interpretation of the text; and the *creation* aspect refers to the synthesis of the text.

Due to the fact that this study focuses on the creation aspect, the second aim of this study is to discover whether some weakness in language proficiency and/or comprehension impacts on MIB. As a result, the study will attempt to answer what causes MIs difficulties: low language proficiency in the target language or poor reading comprehension skills.

As adult foreign language learners at university level, students have already mastered one language, Spanish. Their reading processes would involve the interplay of two language systems, one (Spanish) at which they are highly proficient, and another, English, which most students do not yet master. Given the fact that MIB, as stated above, is a vital skill, it is necessary to ask why, if all students have equal access to their L1, they do not seem to be able to transfer their MIB strategies from their L1 toolbox and apply them when building main ideas from English-written texts.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### ***L1 literacy, L2 proficiency and L2 reading development***

The issue of L1 and L2 connections came to fore when Alderson (1974) posed the widely quoted question asking whether L2 reading is a language problem or a reading problem. The Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins 1976, 1979) states that L1 literacy provides a good foundation for second language development and posits there are fundamental similarities between first and second language reading skills, which are interdependent. This implies that once students have attained reading proficiency in one language, those L1 reading skills would be transferred across any language since the set of acquired reading operations would always be available and ready to use in any other language regardless language proficiency.

Cummins (1981) stated that reading ability transfer in real-world educational settings has not been found to occur in all cases. The author reformulated the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and posited the Threshold Hypothesis, which asserts that language transfer is only

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possible after a threshold level of L2 proficiency has been attained. Thus, some threshold of L2 proficiency appears to be necessary for skilled L1 readers to maintain their competence while reading in the L2. This implies that it is the attained linguistic competence what determines cognitive growth in other domains. Language proficiency below the threshold level would result in failure or, at least, retardation in the development of certain skills whereas the attainment of a higher level of linguistic knowledge would result in accelerated cognitive growth and a greater ease in developing new skills. According to the author, when a learner has a low proficient level in L2, he/she may suffer from negative cognitive effects. However, when a learner develops a high proficiency in L2 there may be a positive cognitive effect.

In the 1990s, research conducted with L2 learners (e.g. Bernhardt, 1993; Nelson-Denny, 1998; Brisbois, 1999; Carrell, 1995), whose L1s were Spanish, French or English, replicated the study carried out by Cummins and seemed to prove the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis. All these aforementioned authors asserted that L2 reading proficiency made a greater contribution to predicting L2 reading comprehension than did L1 reading proficiency and that the correlation between L1 and L2 reading proficiency increased with L2 proficiency.

### **Learning Strategies**

Learning strategies are deemed as behaviors and thoughts that learners engage in during learning and are intended to influence the learner's encoding process. Lessard-Clouston (1997:2) refers to them as "natural, habitual and preferred ways of absorbing, processing and retaining new information and skills," From the existing literature, it is clear that learning strategies are not only general but they also reveal specific language techniques that learners use for problem solving or information processing.

### **Cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies in reading**

The use of cognition (mental processes engendered by learners in performing a task) and meta-cognition (self-assessment of one's own progress) in reading has increasingly been recognized as a crucial factor for information processing. Available literature shows that cognition and meta-cognition are closely interrelated, and any discussion is bound to overlap with the other. However, for the purpose of this research, they will be discussed separately though it will be shown how they complement each other.

Cognitive strategies are the means that learners use to acquire, retain and retrieve different kinds of knowledge and/or performance. Cognitive psychologists have identified three types of knowledge describing cognitive strategies: declarative, procedural and conditional. Declarative knowledge refers to the aspect of "knowing that" and implies the awareness of information. Procedural knowledge relates to the "knowing how" and the information about procedures, rules and principles. Conditional knowledge refers to the aspect of "knowing when to apply knowledge and why". As it can be seen from these characterizations, cognitive strategies may, thus, be said to encompass declarative and procedural knowledge, which help assimilate information, as well as conditional knowledge, which is believed to overlap with meta-cognitive strategies.

O'Malley & Chamot (1990:44) define meta-cognitive strategies as "higher order executive skills". Meta-cognition includes taking conscious control of learning, planning and selecting appropriate strategies, monitoring progress, correcting errors, analyzing the effectiveness of the strategies as well as changing them when necessary. The use of meta-cognitive strategies has been shown to be among the major factors explaining the difference between good and poor readers since the former typically execute two or more meta-cognitive strategies when they read (Swanson & De la Paz, 2003).

### **Main Idea Building**



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A main idea (MI) is a short text derived from another text which, despite its shortness, is *complete* because it states and organizes hierarchically the main points given by the author on the original text in the MI builder's own words (Anderson, 2009). Following Kintsch & Van Dijk (1978, 1983, 2004), MIB would consist of four macro-rules: omitting, selecting, generalizing and integrating. Omission refers to the deletion of the trivial information; the elimination of those propositions whose function is to clarify doubts, give additional information and examples. Selection is related to the omission of propositions which can be inferred from others. Generalization is the substitution of those propositions which can be replaced by a more general one that encompasses them in a global manner. Integration refers to the reconstruction of the text in the reader's own words from the resulting propositions to form a global concept of the original text.

Early studies on MIB concentrated on L1 speakers and were interested in establishing whether they were able to grasp MIs, focus on the author's viewpoint (Brown, Day & Jones, 1978; Johns, 1984; Winograd, 1984). At this early stage, most of the research on MIB involved text comparisons between poor and skilled learners at elementary and secondary schools. The results identified three main difficulties among poor MI builders: difficulties in understanding the task of MI building (Baker & Brown, 1984); problems in selecting the important points (Meyer, Brandt & Bluth, 1980); and difficulties in condensing the text (Day, 1980; and Winograd, 1984).

The next phase of the research into MIB focused on studying MI protocols and procedures for MIB used by "under-prepared" native-speaking university students. It was discovered that the MIs of "under-prepared" students neither included all major points of the text, nor did they effectively combine main ideas to form a coherent text.

Current research on MIB strategies has shifted its focus from native students to those used by non-native ones. John & Meyers (1990) studied the MI protocols of university non-native learners and found that the difference between adept and under-prepared students was that the latter copied directly single units of ideas due to their inability to apply self-monitoring strategies.

It appears, from previous research, that difficulties in MIB are rooted in poor language proficiency. However, it is unknown whether that is the only feature that impacts on MIB. This study examines what causes such difficulties: poor reading comprehension skills, poor strategy use or low proficiency in the target language. More specifically, the study attempts to answer the following questions:

- a. Do students who have either high or low proficiency in their target language perform differently when building the main ideas from a text in Spanish than when they construct ideas from a text in English?
- b. What makes main idea building so problematic, low language proficiency, lack of reading skills or poor strategy use?
- c. Is there any fundamental difference in the way how high and low proficient main idea builders use strategies?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Participants***

This research was based on a stratified random sampling. Participants were 40 adult students (11 males, 29 females) studying at the Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Buenos Aires. They were students of the following careers: Communication, Politics, Human Resources, and Sociology. They had been studying between 4 and 8 years ( $M= 6.2$ ). On average, students were 26-41 years old ( $M= 34.9$ ). They were Argentinean and spoke Spanish as their L1.

At university, students are expected to enroll in three courses of English: English I, English II and English III, which focus on developing strategic reading rather than on teaching English.



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Participants were attending their last English course. They were required to have passed the previous two levels or to have sat for an independent exam. Students were divided into four sub-groups, each of them made up of 10 students, according to their language proficiency, or to whether they had attended the English I and II courses. Because of time constraints, proficiency was measured by asking students what their level of English was, and if they could provide some certification that would support it. Students who were at an advanced or high intermediate level were deemed to have a high language proficiency in English whereas those who were at an elementary level or had never studied English before were considered to have a low proficiency in English. There were no students who considered themselves to be at an intermediate level of English or who could provide any certification stating they had reached that level of English proficiency. Attendance to the previous courses was taken into account since it would reveal if students had been taught strategic reading. As a result, students were grouped in the following way:

Group A: High English proficiency /had attended English I and II

Group B: High English proficiency/ had not attended English I and II

Group C: Low English proficiency/ had attended English I and II

Group D: Low English proficiency/ had not attended English I and II

### **Instruments and procedures**

#### **Task 1**

Participants were given the introduction of an academic text written in English titled: "Boom, Gloom, Doom. Balance Sheets, Monetary Fragmentation and the Politics of Financial Crisis in Argentina and Russia" (696 words) by Woodruff, D. H., published in *The Guardian*. September 11, 2011 and downloaded from [www.sagepublications.com](http://www.sagepublications.com).

The main reason for selecting this text was its scientific relevance, relatively familiar content, and cognitive and rhetorical appropriateness. Participants were asked to complete an activity designed to measure their reading comprehension level. The activity comprised a *true/ false/ not given* exercise. Following Kurtis (2005), this kind of activity has a number of advantages: it is not time consuming, it is familiar to students regardless their language proficiency, and it statistically decreases the possibilities of having "lucky guesses", which is the main flaw of multiple choice activities. The instructions as well as the activities were written in Spanish so as to ensure that, if participants failed the activity it would be due to poor text comprehension rather than to failure to understand the instructions. The reading section had ten points. The answers were scored as either correct or incorrect; one grade assigned to each correct answer and zero was given to unacceptable answers. Students who obtained six grades (60%) or more were considered to have good reading skills. Those students who scored below six were considered to have poor reading skills.

Subsequently, participants were asked to write the MIs of the aforementioned text in two sentences. In the rubrics it was stated that there was specific information participants should include in the MI in order to check whether they had understood the instructions. Then, they were given three questions to state the strategies they had used. Participants were given 90 minutes to complete the task. (See appendix A) Once the task had been completed, students were asked to hand it in together with all the drafts that had been made as they could provide some useful insights into how students create their MIs.

#### **Task 2**

Task 2 replicated task 1 but with a Spanish-written text. Participants were given the introduction of an academic text titled "Impacto de la crisis internacional en Argentina", by Gaba, E., published in "Impacto de la crisis internacional en Argentina", September 11, 2011, and downloaded from <http://www.econ.uba.ar>. The text was 683 words long. As in task 1, participants were given a *true/false/not given* activity. After completing it, they were asked to state the main ideas from the text in two sentences, and to answer some questions about the

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strategies they had used. The scoring procedure was the same as in task 1. Participants were given 90 minutes to complete the task. (Appendix B) Once the task had been completed, students were asked to hand it in together with all the drafts that had been made as they could provide some useful insights into how students create their MIs.

### **MI Scoring Protocol**

MIs were analyzed by a multi-stage scheme. MIs were first read without categorizing the strategies that had been used. Then, they were read again in order to classify their characteristics. The classification system developed by John & Meyers (1990) was used for determining the strategies for MIB. MIs were given a total score of 12 points. The students who constructed MIs which obtained 7.2 points or more (60%) were considered to have achieved an acceptable level of MIB skill. On the other hand, students scoring below 7.2 points were considered to possess poor MIB skills.

The scoring protocol was divided into six categories. The first was whether students had been able to find the core of the text. This category was divided into three parts.

G1: Full core of the text is stated (2 points.)

G2: Part of the core is stated (1 points.)

G3: No core at all is stated or only a little part of it. (0 point)

The next item in the scale was idea units (IUs), which refers to the extent to which participants produced correct IUs.

C: Correct IUs (2 points)

PC: Partially correct (1 point)

INC: Incorrect IUs (0 point)

Generalization was treated at three levels:

FG: Full generalization of ideas (2 points.)

PG: Partial generalization of ideas (1 point.)

NG: Little or no generalization of ideas. (0 point)

Under resourcing, it was considered whether students had tried to use their own words in their MIBs.

R: Ideas are fully paraphrased (2 points.)

PR: Ideas are partially paraphrased (1 point.)

C: Ideas are copied verbatim (0 point.)

Furthermore, it was deemed important to see if students had avoided distortions. This was analyzed at three levels: the idea units, the macro propositions and how students understood new words.

D1: The extent the meaning of the original text has been lost or whether students have added information that misrepresents the original message. (2 points)

D2: Inaccurate information and/or irrelevant comments (0 point)

D3: Misinterpretation of key words. (0 point)

Finally, idea grouping was regarded as one of the conscious strategies used for MIB.

G1: Use of coordination and subordination to form cohesive MIs. (2 points)

G2: Use of half-baked combinations relying on the original words and sentences when writing MIs (1 point.)

G3: Use of run-on combination where several sentences from the original passage have been copied verbatim in a less organized way (0 point)

### **Task 3**

A questionnaire to collect quantitative data was implemented. It contained a total of 24 items in a Likert format. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: (a) cognitive strategies, and (b) meta-cognitive strategies. Participants were required to circle their response to each question on the scale of: (1) Never, (2) Rarely, (3) Sometimes and (4) Always. A reliability analysis was used to calculate the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. The result (.819) is above cutoff point of reliability (.7).

The classification system developed by Nassaji (2003) and Phakiti (2003) was used to judge students' use of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies.

Cognitive strategies:

1. Note making (NM): The underlining, jotting down of the main ideas; or the writing down of the main ideas in an outline form, a rough draft or graph.
2. Grouping (GRP): The reordering or reclassifying of main ideas into a conceptually related unit.
3. Recombination/resourcing (RR): The construction of sentences which are coordinated and subordinated in a self-expressive manner.
4. Deduction/infering (DI): The ability to use available information from the text to guess the meanings of unfamiliar expressions or new words.

Meta-cognitive strategies

1. Directed attention (DA): The ability to differentiate among main ideas and minor information either examples, illustrations, etc., which should be ignored in the final MI.
2. Planning (P): The ability to diagram and map out the actions which will be taken to fulfill the specific demands of the task measured by the relevance of main and supporting ideas.
3. Self-assessment (SA): The ability to check, verify, or correct mistakes. This was evaluated according to the amount of self-correction done on the MI draft and to the ability to include all the required main concepts in the final MI.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ***Statistical analysis and interpretation of research questions and problems***

After comparing the MIs built by the students from both, the text in English and the text in Spanish, results were organized in tables and diagrams. As shown in the table below, students performed better when reading and building MIs of Spanish-written texts than when constructing main ideas from texts written in English. A t-test was conducted to verify the relation between reading comprehension and MIB skills. Results showed a non-significant interaction between reading comprehension abilities in English and MIB of English-written texts ( $t\text{-test} = 1.58, p = 4.11$ ). However, there was a statistically significant relationship between L1 reading comprehension abilities and MIB from English-written texts ( $t\text{-test} = 10.43, p = 4.11$ ), but the magnitude of the effect was small ( $\eta^2 = .05$ ), indicating that only 50% of the variation in MIB can be due to proficient L1 reading.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Average score</b>	<b>Min. score</b>	<b>Max. score</b>
<b>Reading in L1</b>	40	.87	.97	8.2	6	9
<b>Reading in FL</b>	40	.52	.92	5.1	2	9
<b>MIB of Spanish-written text</b>	40	.83	.96	6.2	5	9
<b>MIB of English-written text</b>	40	.42	.91	4.1	2	10

Figure 1: MIB scores

There was a significant relationship between proficiency in English and MIB ( $t\text{-test} = 134.45, p = 4.11$ ). However, the magnitude of the effect is small ( $\eta^2 = .05$ ), indicating that only 50% of the variation in MIB can be due to English proficiency.

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Since the students participating in the study had been divided into two groups according to their proficiency in English, it was necessary to find to which group that figure referred to: students at a high level of English or students with no or little knowledge of English. The statistical analysis showed that 50% of the students who had obtained good scores in MIB from English-written texts were those students who had an upper-intermediate level of the target language (Fischer's  $r$  to  $Z$  = 38.03,  $p$  = 1.63).

This study seems to confirm the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (Cummins, 1981), which demonstrates a positive transfer of reading abilities across languages provided the student has a high proficiency level in the target language. This point explains why L1 literacy only accounts for 50% of successful MIB when reading English-written texts: only students with an upper-intermediate level of English were able to transfer their L1 skills to the task of building the main idea of a text written in a foreign language. Those students with a low language proficiency in English might not have reached the threshold level that allows the transfer of skills to occur.

A two way independent measure, ANOVA (Language proficiency: high and low; and strategy use: high strategy use and low strategy use), was conducted in order to detect which of these two variables has a greater impact on MIB. The language proficiency variable proved to be significant again ( $F_{1,36} = 138.93$ ,  $p = 4.11$ ). However, the magnitude effect was small (eta square = .05), a point which agrees on the above mentioned results. Similarly, *post hoc* tests showed that students who are highly proficient in English produce more proficient MIs than their counterparts (Fischer's Protected  $t$ -test, 18.88,  $p = 1.64$ ).

Regarding strategy use, ANOVA revealed a statistically significant relation between strategy use and proficient MIBs. High proficiency MIBs tend to use a wide range of strategies ( $F_{1,36} = 130.68$ ,  $p = 4.11$ ), and the magnitude of the difference of the means was large (eta square = .73), which shows that 73% of variation in MIB can be due to strategy use. Post hoc tests showed that low proficient MIBs employ significantly fewer cognitive strategies than their counterparts (Fischer's Protected  $t$ -test = -106.47,  $p = 1.64$ ). Similarly, the former use significantly fewer meta-cognitive strategies than the latter (Fischer's Protected  $t$ -test = -166.37,  $p = 1.64$ ).

ANOVA showed that the interaction of the two variables, language proficiency and strategy use, was statistically very significant ( $F_{1,36} = 357.93$ ,  $p = 1.64$ ). Students with high language proficiency in English and high strategy use are more successful MIB (Fischer's Protected  $t$ -test = 236.37,  $p = 1.64$ ). The magnitude of the effect was very large (eta square = .90), therefore it is possible to assert that the combination of high language proficiency in the target language and high strategy use accounts for 90% of successful MIB.

Summing up, the main sources of difficulties appear to be: a) students' lack of strategies which explains the 73% of success in MIB, b) lack of proficiency in English which does not allow a positive transfer from L1 reading and demonstrates the 50% of success in MIB. As a result, it would appear that strategy training might help override the threshold factor.

### **Strategy use in high and low proficient MIBs**

A Fischer's  $r$  to  $Z$  transformation was used to verify if there is a correlation between the students who had not attended English I and II and those who showed a poor strategy use. The statistical analysis proved that students who had attended English I and II were good at strategy use, and thus they were more proficient MIB. On the contrary, those students who had not attended English I and II showed a poor use of strategies, and consequently poor MIB skills. As a result, MIB may be improved when students receive direct strategy instruction.

Research on strategies used for MIB showed that low proficient MIBs appear to have two preferred strategies: scanning, and note taking while they disregard meta-cognitive strategies. However, highly proficient MIBs seem to have a set of strategies, both cognitive and meta-

cognitive, which they would orchestrate according to the demands of the task. The following diagrams show the results:

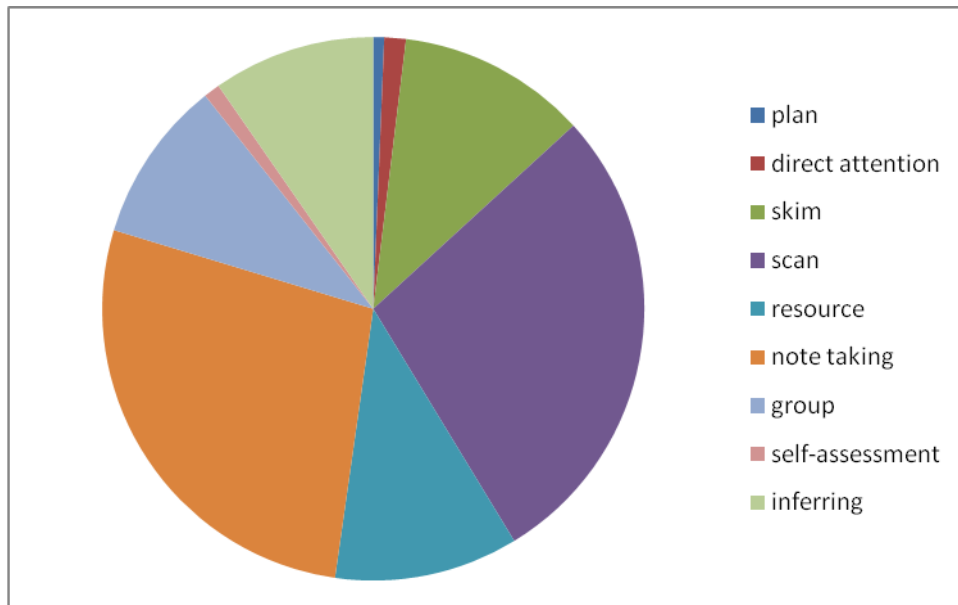


Figure 1: Strategies used by low proficient MI builders

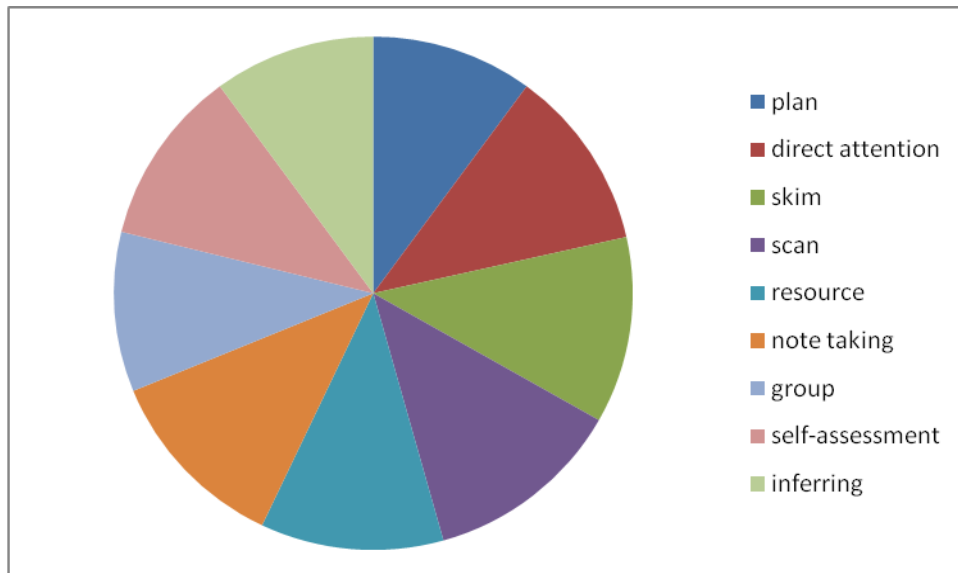


Figure 2: Strategies used by highly proficient MI builders

### **Skimming and scanning**

The questionnaire given as task three as well as the questions given as a reflection exercise at the end of task 1 were used to verify whether students were used to skimming and scanning. Low proficient MIBs seem to prefer scanning over skimming, whereas the opposite trend is evidenced in highly proficient MIBs. This may explain how strategy use can influence on the final output. Since scanning is a strategy that is used for focusing on specific information, gathering data throughout a text and being accurate, low proficient MIBs usually fail to build the main idea from the text as they focus on specific ideas which add little relevant information. However, skimming, which is preferred by highly proficient MIBs, is used for finding the overall purpose of the text, the author's thesis, the organizational structure of the text and for reviewing, which seems to be a better strategy for efficient MIB. Thus, this strategy choice may not only explain the success of

highly proficient MIBs, but it can also offer some insights into the reasons why low proficient MIBs tend to include specific information.

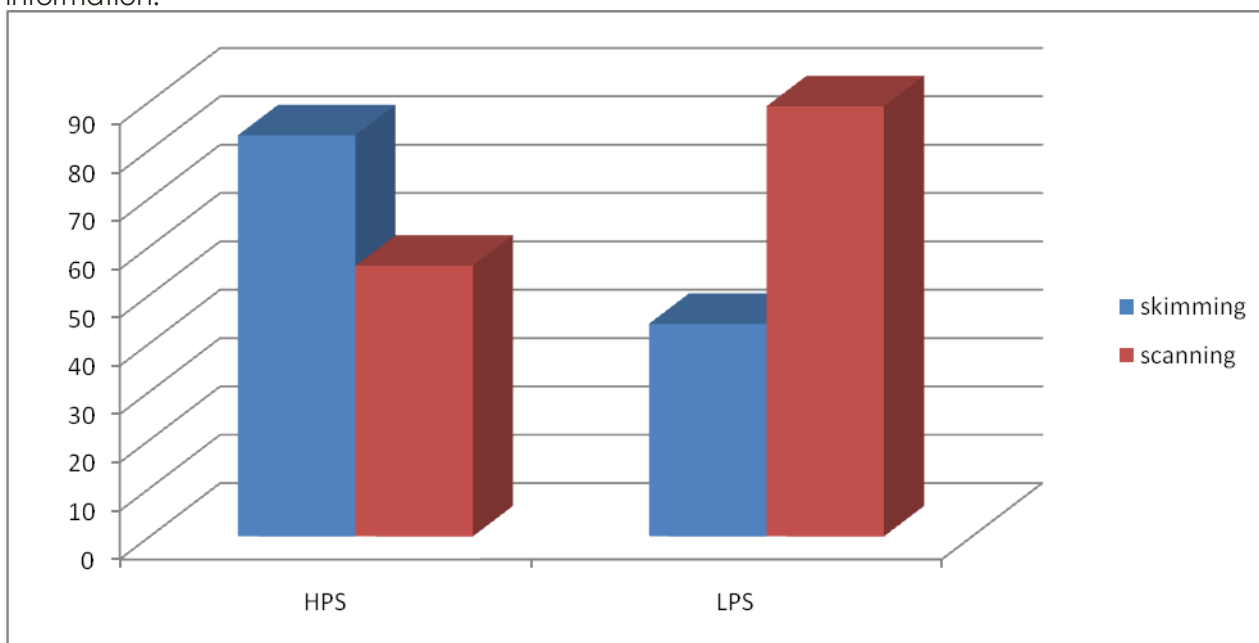


Figure 3: Skimming and scanning trends in high and low proficient MI builders

### Note-taking

Note-taking was analyzed from students' answers to the questionnaire given as task three as well as the questions given as a reflection exercise at the end of task one, but most importantly it was examined from the drafts made by students. Students' notes were compared and contrasted against the MIs that had been ultimately produced.

According to Kurtis (2006), those highly proficient MIBs tend to take down notes whereas their counterparts directly plunge into writing. Conversely, this research seems to demonstrate that both, high and low proficient MIBs, take notes; however, there seems to be a qualitative difference in their note taking patterns.

The note taking pattern of those low proficient MIBs is similar to a copying and pasting pattern, by means of which students locate pieces of information appearing relevant on the text, reduplicate them in their notes in order to reduplicate them in their MIs. Their MIs are presented in the form of a serialization of statements rather than in a coherent combination of them. They appear to lack the language proficiency and the strategies to create meaningful notes that would help them construct a cohesive MI in their own words.

As a result, their notes do not highlight important points, show poor relationships between ideas, disagree with the rhetorical structure of the text, contain non-essential words and occur in the form of verbatim notes. This note taking pattern is inconsistent with the practice of effective MIB, which claims that MI builders should try to understand the gist of the text and its rhetorical patterns.

Below, I have copied verbatim the notes and final MI of a low proficient MIB. This student first underlines IUs on the original text and takes notes before producing the final MI. It is possible to observe how the MI is an example of the exact copying and pasting of the notes, which were numbered for better recognition. In doing so, this student has translated ideas literally, a fact which hinders the comprehension of his MI, and has failed to combine ideas through coordination and subordination due to his heavy reliance on the use of words and sentences

from the original text. Accordingly, the student appears to have created a run-on MI into which pieces of the text have been stuck together inappropriately.

Notes	MI
(1) Link the value of domestic currency closely to the dollar (2) Boom, gloom and doom (3) ERSB combines high interest rates with efforts to regain investors confidence to bring these rates down (4) Such effort rarely succeed	<i>El texto habla de (1) liga el valor de la moneda doméstica cercanamente al dólar: (2) boom, gloom y doom. (3) ERSB combina altas tasas de interés con esfuerzos para reganar la confianza de los inversores para bajar esas tazas (4) tales esfuerzos raramente tienen éxito.</i>

Figure 4: Comparison between a low proficient MI builder's note taking pattern and his ultimate MI

On the contrary, those highly proficient MIBs seem to present a note taking pattern which highlights important ideas, shows relationships between them, evidences the rhetorical structure of the text, and contains essential words. Accordingly, their MIs are, in qualitative terms, more coherent and cohesive since they show an ideational link.

The following is an example of the correlation between the notes and the MI written by a highly proficient MIB. This student, similarly to the low proficient MIB, first underlines IUs on the original text; however, his notes, which occur in the form of a concept map, are used to create a cohesive MI. On the other hand the notes of the low proficient MIB led him to include few important IUs, which were distorted due to poor ideational link. The highly proficient MIB did not include any specific ideas because his note taking pattern seems to have assisted him in outlining the ideational link of the text. Thus, he may have been able to omit irrelevant information more easily than the low proficient MIB.

Consequently, it is possible to say that efficient note taking appears to avoid the focusing on specific information; instead it highlights relationships between ideas and the author's purpose. Furthermore, the example bellow shows how concept mapping, which is greatly emphasized in our courses, has been used in order to outline the ideational link of the text. Even though it is not the purpose of this research to evaluate the concept map displayed below, it can be seen, as previously stated, that training students in the use of strategies helps them become more effective readers and MIB.

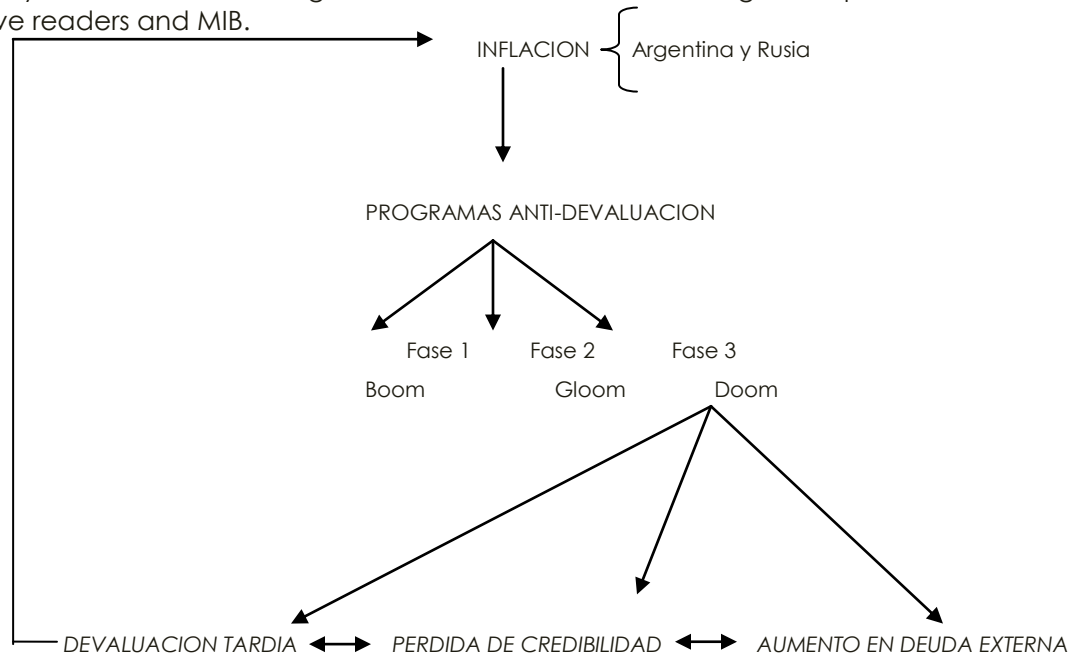


Figure 5: Note taking pattern of a highly proficient MI builder (verbatim copied)



El autor argumenta que en épocas de inflación los gobiernos se esfuerzan por evitar la devaluación mediante el mantenimiento de la paridad peso-dólar. El autor utiliza los casos de Rusia y Argentina para demostrar que tal accionar tiene tres etapas (boom, gloom y doom), las cuales comienzan por un aparente éxito, pero irónicamente crean una situación que sólo puede ser solucionada mediante la devaluación de la moneda nacional

Figure 6: A highly proficient MIB's main idea (verbatim copied)

### Grouping

Regarding the strategy of grouping IUs on the basis of their common attributes in order to produce a cohesive MI, only 34% of low proficient MI builders were able to group ideas effectively. This might explain why they usually produce MIs that look like a succession of serialized points, which suggests they are still operating at a pre-structural level that relies heavily on "knowledge telling" rather than "knowledge transformation". There is a lack of an ideational link or semantic thesis. Ideas are strung together incoherently, resulting in the production of a truncated text which lacks fluency. As a result, low proficient MI builders appear to resort to what Ellis (1987:184) calls *reduction strategies*, which are adopted as an "end that justifies the means", by giving up part of the intended communication goal. This qualitative difference in students' ability to recombine ideas confirms the cognitive superiority of students trained in strategy use, who are able to restructure their ideas; unlike their counterparts, who copy whole chunks of information.

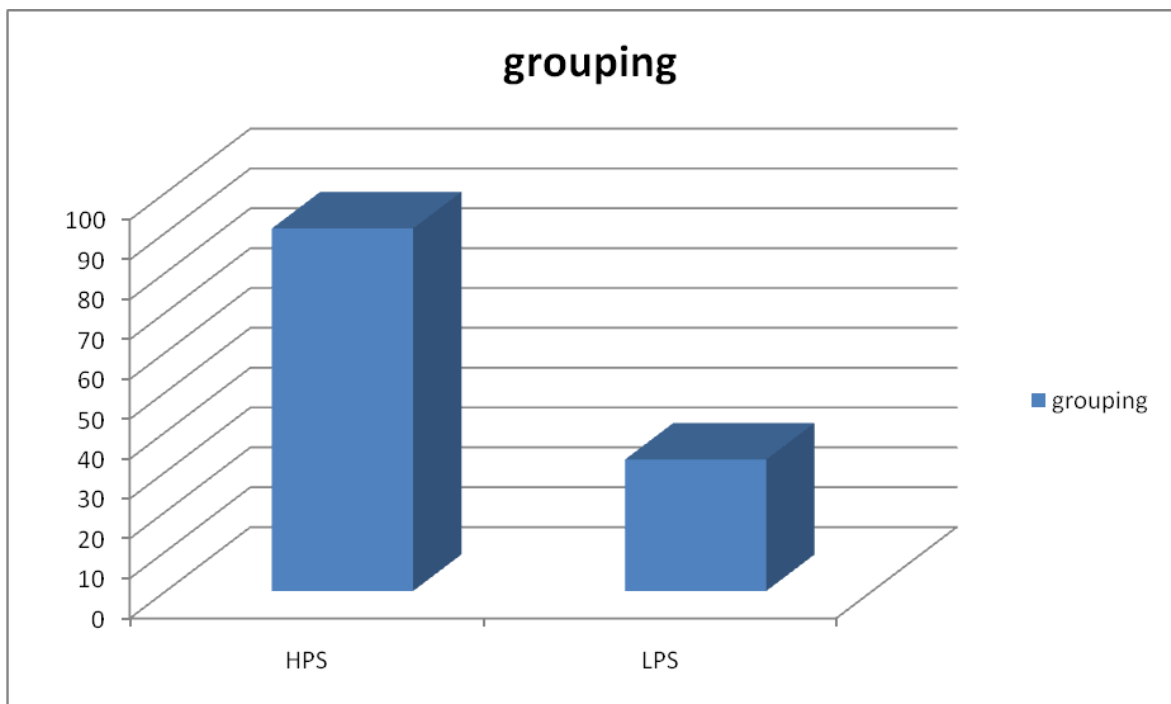


Figure 7: Grouping abilities in high and low proficient MI builders.

Below I have copied verbatim the MI produced by a low proficient MI builder. This example illustrates how the student cannot group IUs on the basis of their common attributes in order to produce a cohesive MI. IUs are wrongly grouped, and there is no thematic progression. This leads to the creation of a circuitous MI that presents not only repeated ideas but also distorted IUs.



(1) El texto habla de las fases por las que pasan los países en crisis inflacionaria, (2) el autor toma los ejemplos de las crisis de Argentina y Rusia, que mantienen la paridad peso-dólar. (3) Aunque la primera fase de la crisis es exitosa – (4) también en Rusia ya que mantuvo la paridad rublo-dólar- (5) ésta fase culmina en una devaluación costosa.

- (1) Existence of three phases
- (2) Fixed parities between the peso-dollar exchange
- (3) Apparent success of the first phase (boom)
- (4) Fixed parities between the ruble-dollar exchange
- (5) Failure of the last phase (doom)

Figure 8: Idea grouping by a low proficient MI builder

**Resourcing/ inferring**

Most low proficient MI builders tend to opt for copying and pasting rather than resourcing. The strategy of copying and pasting belongs to the group of strategies that Ellis (1987:184) calls *achievement strategies*. They are used when learners have a problem with articulating the required information but decide to persevere by repeating the same information in different words. This strategy is a compensatory strategy intended to achieve the intended communicative goal. Thus, in trying to accomplish that goal, they recycle the same information. The learner may or may not achieve the intended result but will have made an effort to convey the message.

Low proficient MI builders appear to copy and paste as a way of being “within a comfort zone”. These students usually believe that their productions cannot be completely incorrect since they are quoting the author’s exact words, as if plagiarizing him, a point which gives them more confidence in the task. This seems to suggest that students regress to their comfort zone when they lack the strategic competence to deal with an academic text, a point which reinforces the importance of teaching strategic reading. Besides, this compensatory strategy often results in inaccurate ideas due to the lack of exact correspondence between English and Spanish.

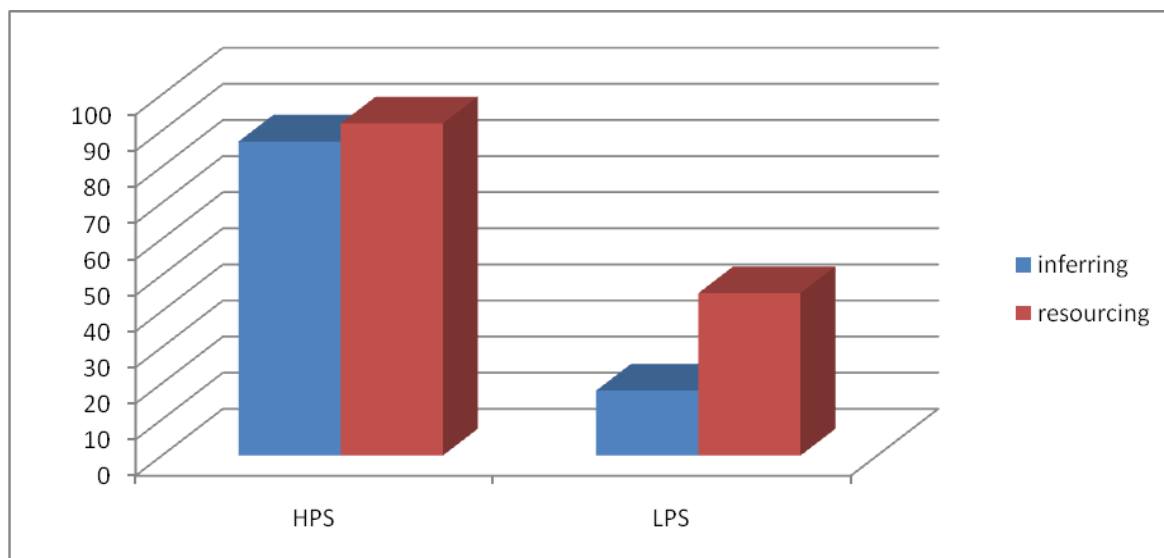


Figure 9: Inferring and resourcing abilities in high and low MI builders

Inferring is a crucial strategy that involves using the available information within a text to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar words. High proficiency MI builders are able to infer the meaning of unknown words from the text efficiently; they tend to paraphrase the unfamiliar words or use

other words with similar meanings. On the other hand, low proficient MI builders do not appear to be able to do so. In most cases, students find it convenient to use the same words as those used on the original text. Many contemporary authors (Rott, 2003; Stanovich, 2005; Street, 2007; etc.) view this practice as legitimate provided they understand the meanings of the word and that the message is effectively communicated. However, these students resort to message reduction strategies that involve giving up some of the idea units they cannot easily extract. Students' inability to infer meanings confirms previous studies on the role of vocabulary in text processing (Coady, 2007), which found that a large repertoire of vocabulary facilitates text comprehension. This suggests that, although texts might contain some technical terms which have no substitutes low proficient MI builders tend to resort to "safety valve" measures by not imposing their own words in their MIs.

Below I reproduce the MIs of high and low proficient MI builders to exemplify how variability in inferring and resourcing abilities influences on MIB. The low proficient MI builder does not seem to be able to infer the meanings of "boom", "gloom" and "doom"; thus, he just copied and pasted the words. Conversely, even though the highly proficient MI builder might not have been able to translate the words "boom", "gloom" and "doom", it is still feasible to observe that he was able to grasp what they refer to. Therefore, the inclusion of the same words which are used on the original text is legitimate when students show they understand what they mean.

<p><i>El autor compara las crisis inflacionarias de Rusia y Argentina a finales del siglo XX, las cuales sus respectivos gobiernos intentaron resistir mediante la aplicación de (1) políticas de estabilización centradas en mantener el valor de la moneda nacional al precio dólar. Estas políticas, (2) si bien parecen efectivas en un comienzo (fase de boom), paradójicamente terminan generando mayores problemas (fases de gloom y doom) que resultan en una devaluación tardía y por lo tanto, aún más costosa que las políticas de estabilización.</i></p>	<p><i>El autor utiliza los ejemplos de Rusia y Argentina para demostrar (1) cómo las ERSB pasan por tres (2) etapas boom, gloom y doom para evitar devaluar la moneda.</i></p>
<p><b>High proficiency MI builder (Elementary level of English/ has attended English I and II)</b></p>	<p><b>Low proficient MI builder (Elementary level of English/ has not attended English I and II)</b></p>

Figure 10: Comparison between resourcing and inferring skills in high and low proficient MI builders. (Copied verbatim)

Furthermore, students seem to go through a resourcing continuum through which they appear to move depending on their progress on their language proficiency in the target language and their use of strategies. Even though resourcing is not directly linked to the ability of finding the MI of the text, it appears to influence significantly on the MI scores by improving the quality of students' output. As it can be observed below, improvements in resourcing correlate with improvements in MIs scores. Also, it can be noted that high proficiency in resourcing is more strongly connected to strategy use than to proficiency in the foreign language, another point which shows that strategy use might help override the threshold factor.

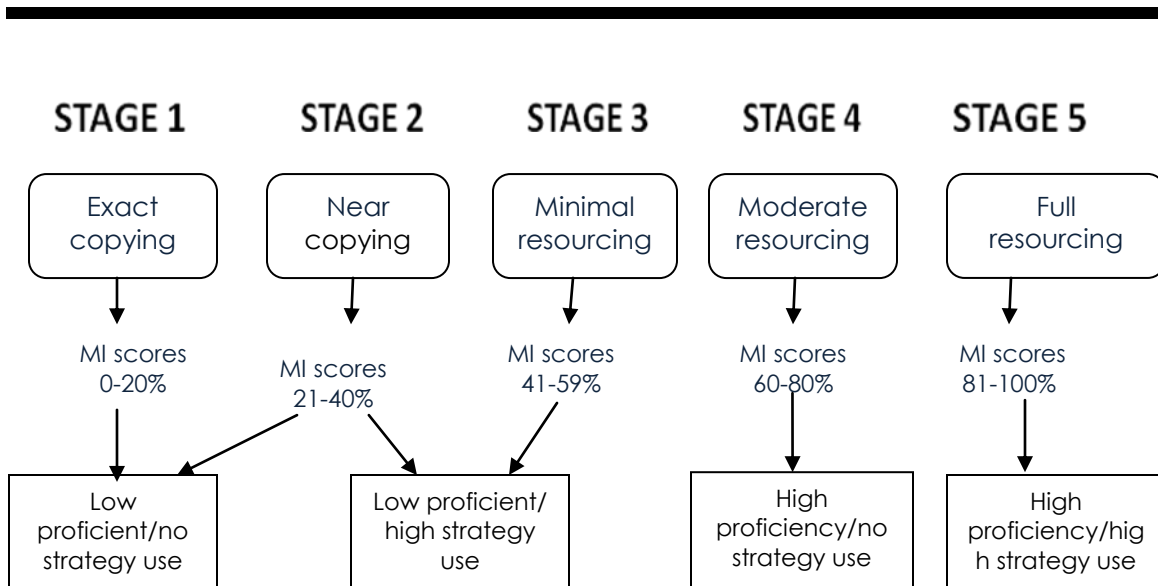


Figure 11: Impact of resourcing abilities on MI scores

### **Meta-cognitive strategies**

#### **Planning**

The vast majority of low proficient MI builders do not seem to plan how to write their MIs. They tend to show a lack of awareness of what is required in order to produce meaningful MIs. On the other hand, highly proficient MI builders appear to fix objectives, plan a course of action, define the content as well as select the methods and techniques for accomplishing the given task.

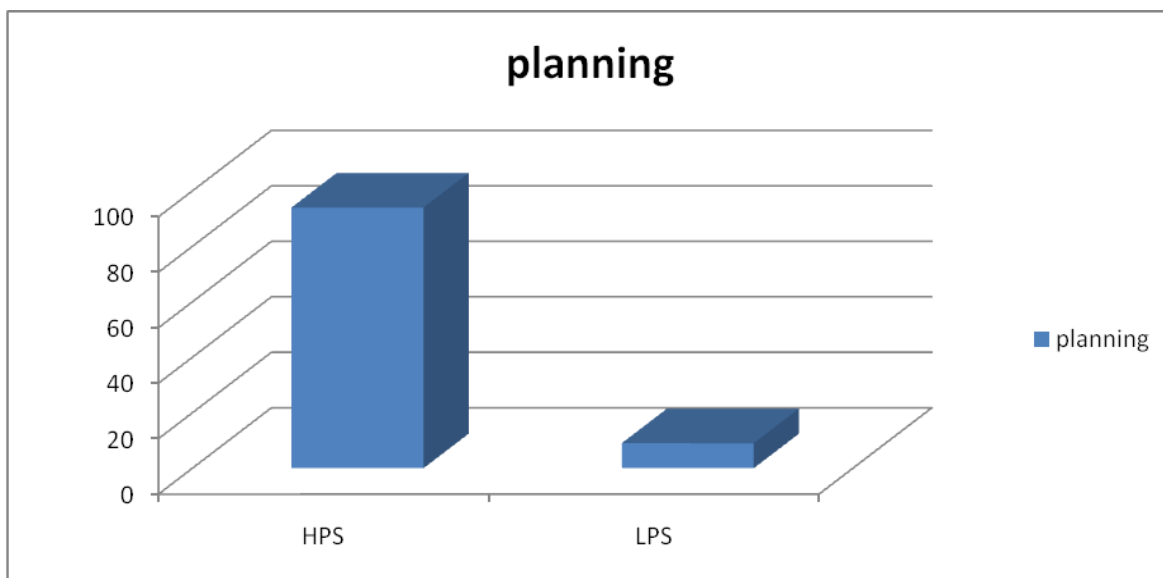


Figure 12: Planning abilities in high and low proficient MI builders

#### **Direct attention**

High proficiency MI builders agreed on the fact that they pay attention to the instructions, the title of the text and/or task in order to get the sense of what the text/task is about. Furthermore, they tend to focus on key words to get the gist of the text.

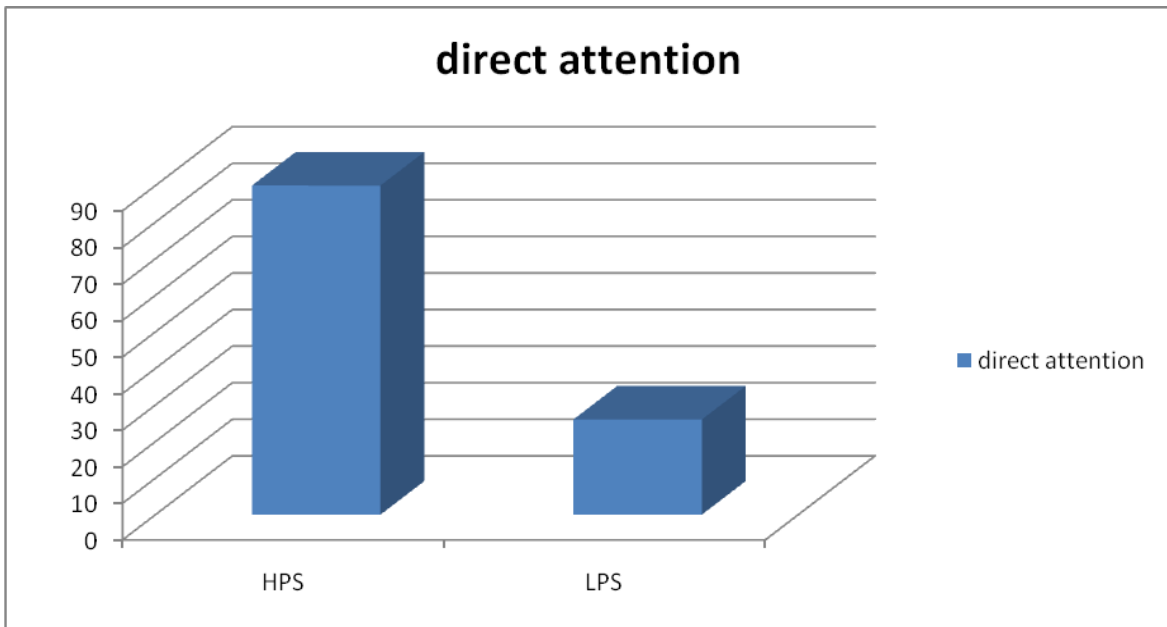


Figure 13: Direct attention abilities in high and low proficient MI builders

Low proficient MI builders might have difficulties in directing their attention since it involves a higher order of executive skills. The limited use of self-evaluation mechanisms confirms that students with poor monitoring skills are less able to build efficient MIs than good monitors, another point which shows the importance of direct strategy teaching.

**Self-assessment strategies**

Low proficient MI builders were generally unable to explain the self-evaluation strategies they used to ensure their final MIs were fine-tuned. This is consistent with the findings of previous researchers (e.g. Flavell, Miller & Miller, 1993), who indicated that unskilled learners are unable to assess their own work.

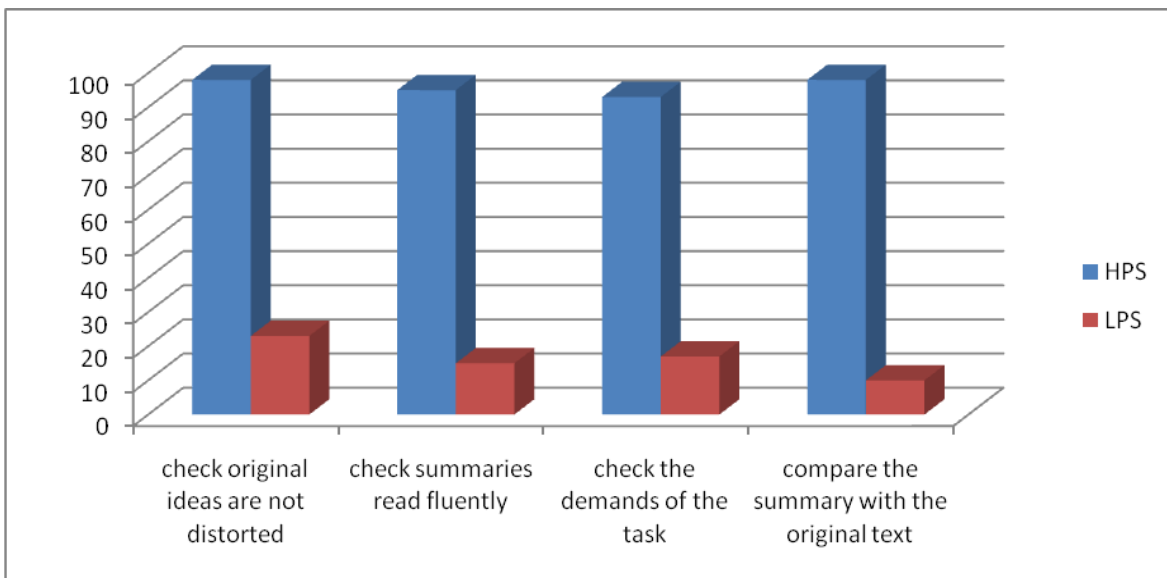


Figure 14: Self-assessment abilities in high and low proficient MI builders

Students' use of meta-cognitive strategies is similar to that of cognitive ones. High proficiency MI builders make drafts before writing their final MIs and evaluate the correctness of the information. In contrast, low proficient MI builders generally do not check whether the information is correct or

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not. As a result, their MIs address few IUs and have instances of distortions. It appears that students who are trained in metacognitive strategies are more focused, more critical and more productive.

## **IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Several implications follow the findings of this study. It seems to be of paramount importance that students should be trained in the use of strategies since it might help them to override the threshold factor. As it was demonstrated in the statistical analysis students who had attended English I and II and had been trained in the use of strategies had greater ease in MIB. Strategy teaching assists students in becoming independent readers and in synthesizing information from academic texts since *a skilled reader is a thinking reader*. In order to become strategic, students need guidance, modeling and assistance in the form of scaffold instruction.

In terms of its results, it would seem that the most difficult aspects of MIB are: locating main ideas, resourcing and grouping ideas within as well as across paragraphs. As a result, the following recommendations illustrate some of the activities in which students are trained in our chair courses.

To tackle the first problem, it could be of help engage students in activities such as finding the thesis of the text or its purpose; writing a suitable sub-title for each paragraph or set of paragraphs; or guiding them with questions and charts for them to discriminate between main and secondary ideas.

Regarding resourcing, practice, first at the sentence level and then at the paragraph level, need to be provided. This is because students need to know that for any given sentence, there is a central idea whereas the rest can be modified, especially because academic texts tend to include rather long sentences, where students appear to lose the main idea. Students can make discussions about what needs to be paraphrased, which terms are central, and therefore could be included as main ideas.

The results also suggest that students have problems in combining ideas within and across paragraphs. They could practice how to group ideas from different paragraphs while retaining the rhetorical relationships established on the original text. They need to be capable of selecting the main theme and then decide how the themes can be linked semantically and thematically. This might be done by giving them practice in selecting ideas from different paragraphs and re-writing them by means of coordinated and subordinated sentences. In the case of the text, students can extract the IUs in a list form and then try to combine the IUs using semantic devices. This can be followed by a discussion of whether students' MIs reflect the gist of the original text.

To facilitate greater understanding, text analysis involving concept mapping can be used to help students to identify the main themes of the text. In this activity, students can identify main ideas and show their relationships by creating a hierarchical organization of ideas and then evaluating the completeness of their productions. Concept mapping is usually a highly appreciated tool for students, who tend to welcome the activity as a means of improving text understanding and their own studying techniques.

Regarding poor language proficiency in the FL, many authors conceive that encouraging students to read widely can develop their language abilities (e.g. Bramford & Day, 1997; Wallace, 1992). These authors suggest that extensive reading leads to automaticity in word and phrase recognition abilities. As Bramford & Day (1997:7) state, "until students read in quantity, they will not become fluent readers".

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### **Limitations and suggestions for further research**

The analysis and interpretation of data of the kind presented in this study is problematic because it is overwhelmingly varied and difficult to categorize. Therefore, the data remains open to alternative interpretations. Besides, strategies, as previously stated, are interdependent. It is difficult to analyze the strategies used for MIB without a certain degree of overlapping. As a result, many strategies seem to converge one with the other.

This research analyzed if university students could transfer their L1 reading and MIB skills to the task of building the MI of an English-written text. Although the answer seems to be that transfer is only possible with those students who had a high proficiency in the target language, this study does not focus on analyzing the extent to which transfer actually occurs, a point which could be an interesting area for future research.

This research was limited in terms of its participants: only students who had reached an elementary, an upper-intermediate or an advanced level of English were considered. Accordingly, participants with an average competence in the English language could be included to further analyze their information processing skills.

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study indicate, notwithstanding their limitations, that there are significant differences between high and low proficient MI builders. It is demonstrated that the major cause of difficulties in MIB is the lack of interaction between high language proficiency and high strategy use.

This research seems to agree with the Linguistics Threshold Hypothesis (Cummins, 1981), whereby L1 reading ability can be positively transferred only when students have reached a certain threshold level of linguistic competence. This point would explain why low proficient MI builders can effectively find the MIs of Spanish-written texts but fail to do so when facing English-written ones.

However, it seems that the use of strategies could override the threshold factor since those students who had taken English I and English II were the ones who were more familiarized with strategy use and thus obtained better results when building MIs. On the contrary, those students who had not attended the aforementioned subjects were more unaware of strategy use and therefore, produced MIs of a poorer quality. These findings echo the various empirical observations that successful students are good at strategy use (Gagne et al., 2003; Kinnunen & Vauras 1997, 2000; Swanson & De la Paz, 2003).

Accordingly, any program intending to develop reading comprehension skills should consider not just the product but also the processes that lead students to arrive at the expected outcome. This study would indicate that it is important to develop strategies for raising awareness of: (a) how to distinguish main ideas from secondary ones; (b) the processes implied in MIB (how to write ideas coherently); (c) the significance of self-evaluating their own productions.

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## Appendix A

### **Boom, Gloom, Doom. Balance Sheets, Monetary Fragmentation and the Politics of Financial Crisis in Argentina and Russia**

Woodruff, D. H. "Boom, Gloom, Doom. Balance Sheets, Monetary Fragmentation and the Politics of Financial Crisis in Argentina and Russia." *The Guardian*. September 11, 2011

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the late twentieth century, many emerging markets adopted exchange-rate policies intended to provide a stable financial anchor in times of serious financial crisis and inflation. Instead, they found themselves drifting into monetary maelstrom. The policy at fault was "exchange-rate-based stabilization" (ERBS), a variety of inflation-fighting program that links the value of the domestic currency closely to the dollar or other authoritative international currencies. Such exchange-rate pledges were intended to rein in inflationary expectations. In this they usually had some immediate successes. However, the commitment to maintain fixed parities between domestic and international currency involves tying—more or less rigidly—the domestic money supply process to inflows and outflows of foreign currency.

ERBS programs thus tend to pass through three phases: boom, gloom, and doom. To make description of these phases easier, I will call the domestic currency the peso and assume it has been tied to the dollar. In the boom phase, capital flows in, the domestic money supply expands, and prices rise in both peso and dollar terms. Sectors that compete on world markets experience a dollar-cost crunch as they lose competitiveness and consumers find it easier to afford imports. In the gloom phase, capital flows reverse, creating deflationary impulses as monetary policy tightens. Businesses begin to experience a peso-cost crunch, as downward price pressure on sales makes it harder to pay for labor, inputs, and finance. Since dollar prices remain high, the cost crunch is now general. It affects government as well by reducing tax collection, prompting either difficult spending cuts or more government borrowing, and more doubts about whether it is sustainable. Devaluation looms. The government seeks to stem the tide of capital outflows by offering higher returns to holding the peso, implying higher interest rates and more contradictory policies. The usual endgame of an ERBS combines high interest rates with efforts to regain investor confidence to bring these rates down. Such efforts rarely succeed, though they can persist for a long time. Eventually, the program reaches its doom, when the authorities decide that devaluation is better than continuing to defend the peg.

Although the tendency to fix exchange rates in order to avoid devaluation has proved in many occasions that it cannot avoid devaluation or solve the already existing financial crisis; it remains surprisingly obscure why so many defenses of pegged exchange rates in the context of inflation-stabilization programs persist so long, and are taken to such extremes. When gloom sets in, why don't proponents of exchange-rate flexibility begin to win some political battles? Why are desperate and expensive efforts made to maintain currency parities in the face of withering market skepticism? These questions are all the more difficult to answer insofar as all current theories fail to explain why governments continue resisting devaluation when it is evident that ERBS not only encounter trouble but also result in a late and therefore, costly devaluation.

The present article seeks to shed light on these questions by investigating the politics of financial crisis in Russia (1998) and Argentina (2001). Both countries embraced an ERBS program as the panacea of high inflation periods. Argentine authorities promised to hold the peso-dollar exchange rate constant, at 1 for 1, permanently. In the event, the policy held from 1991 until late 2001. Russia's currency band, known as the "ruble corridor," allowed the exchange rate to vary within preannounced parameters around a central value that at times itself underwent a scheduled devaluation. The policy survived from mid-1995 until mid-1998. Both countries contracted very large amounts of foreign debt in the final stages of their failed efforts to save



their exchange rate. In both, the currency's fall was very large; much larger than it would have been with an earlier devaluation when more reserves were available. Both countries unarguably engaged in a futile and expensive delay of devaluation. Yet, Argentina delayed far longer than Russia, whether in terms of simple chronological time, of financial complications braved, or of the spread of expectations about impending devaluation. Below, I shall try to explain the reason why governments insist on using ERBS as panaceas for financial crisis when there are plenty examples showing that in fact they are harmful for economic tools.

### ACTIVIDADES

Haga un círculo en la opción correspondiente

	Verdadero (V)	Falso (F)	No dice (ND)
1. Tanto Rusia como Argentina decidieron devaluar sus monedas inmediatamente	V	F	ND
2. El autor cree que la crisis internacional afectó la decisión de Rusia y Argentina de devaluar.	V	F	ND
3. Rusia y Argentina ligaron sus monedas al dólar para combatir la inflación	V	F	ND
4. Los programas ERBS pasan por tres fases: desarrollo – oscuridad – fatalidad	V	F	ND
5. La caída monetaria de Rusia y Argentina no fue tan drástica debido a que ambos países devaluaron tardíamente	V	F	ND
6. Rusia contrajo una deuda externa aún mayor que la Argentina	V	F	ND
7. El autor propone evaluar la literatura descripta por Jeffry Frieden	V	F	ND
8. El autor considera que el aspecto sociológico de un país afecta sus políticas de devaluación	V	F	ND
9. La intervención de las agencias gubernamentales en los programas de ERBS es recomendable	V	F	ND
10. El autor concluye que la mayoría de los países que devalúan tienen dificultad en reconstruir su confianza financiera a nivel internacional	V	F	ND

**Escriba las ideas principales en castellano en no más de 2 oraciones del texto que acaba de leer. No olvide incluir las tres fases a las que hace referencia el texto, y cuáles son los dos países sobre los que se basa el estudio**

**Piense en las estrategias que utilizó para escribir las ideas principales del texto y responda las siguientes preguntas:**

¿Cuáles son las tres estrategias que lo ayudaron a comprender el texto?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuáles fueron los tres pasos más importantes que realizó para escribir las ideas principales?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuáles fueron los tres pasos que realizó para evaluar su redacción de ideas principales?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Impacto de la crisis internacional en Argentina

Gaba, E. "Impacto de la crisis internacional en Argentina". Retrieved September 11, 2011 from <http://www.econ.uba.ar>

#### Introducción

En el período 2003/2008, la economía argentina creció en promedio un 9% anual, muy por encima del crecimiento potencial de largo plazo del 3,3% anual. En este ciclo expansivo se recuperó notablemente el empleo, se apreció el peso en términos reales y las tasas de interés reales fueron negativas.

La crisis internacional comenzó a mediados del 2008 pasado cuando los mercados advirtieron el posible riesgo de morosidad de los préstamos hipotecarios *subprime* (créditos de viviendas a deudores con ingresos bajos-medios). Al mismo tiempo, los bancos de inversión ofrecieron productos financieros sofisticados que los inversores compraban atraídos por su alto rendimiento pero sin conocer (o entender) el riesgo que asumían. Estos productos, que hace sólo dos años eran alabados como una innovación financiera que mejoraba la relación retorno/riesgo y ahora llamados productos "tóxicos", fueron distribuidos mundialmente mediante tres canales.

El primer canal por el cual se infiltró la crisis fue la reducción en los términos de intercambio que finalizaría la etapa de fuerte suba de los años 2006/2008. Los commodities agrícolas y el petróleo, que constituyen el 45% del total de las exportaciones argentinas, y sus precios tuvieron un fuerte derrumbe en los meses recientes, produciendo una disminución del 1,3% en el PIB del 2009.

El segundo canal se encontró en el nuevo aumento del riesgo país, a partir de la quiebra de Lehman Brothers producida el 15 de septiembre de 2008, esta vez generado un choque externo. El ambiente externo negativo aún continúa porque, si bien hay mayor estabilización del sistema financiero mundial, el pesimismo se traslada hacia el sector real, donde se generaliza el diagnóstico de una recesión mundial.

El tercer canal de transmisión se vincula con el posible impacto sobre la política cambiaria, dado que la crisis internacional produjo un cambio importante de paridades de monedas entre los principales socios comerciales de Argentina. En efecto, en el primer semestre de 2008 se presentaba una situación singular en las paridades entre monedas, ya que el euro era muy apreciado con respecto al dólar y lo mismo sucedía con el real (Brasil) respecto a la moneda norteamericana. Este comportamiento de los agentes económicos le confiere una ventaja especial a USA porque puede estabilizar una crisis de confianza emitiendo su propia moneda y absorber esta emisión emitiendo más bonos, algo prácticamente imposible de lograr en Argentina donde los ahorros están muy dolarizados. Todo esto produce presiones al alza de la paridad peso argentino/ dólar por dos razones: Argentina tiene más inflación que sus socios comerciales, de modo que para mantener el tipo de cambio real necesita devaluar más. En segundo lugar, la tasa de depreciación reciente del peso frente al dólar, es muy inferior a la depreciación que tuvieron sus principales socios comerciales.

El efecto negativo de los canales de transmisión analizados previamente indica que el año 2008 es de transición hacia un nuevo ciclo de carácter más contractivo. En este nuevo entorno, el PIB crecería sólo 1,9% en el 2009, es decir, el output gap se volvería negativo frenando la creación de empleo y presionando hacia una menor inflación. El tipo de cambio real dejaría de caer y las tasas reales de interés se volverían positivas en términos reales.

De cara al futuro, esta inédita crisis mundial origina interrogantes aún sin respuestas adecuadas: ¿Significa un colapso del capitalismo americano basado en el libre mercado y la necesidad de

una mayor regulación y/o intervención del gobierno sobre los mercados? ¿La intermediación financiera vuelve al modelo de banca universal y desaparecen los bancos de inversión? O simplemente ¿fracasó la regulación de estas últimas instituciones?

El objetivo del presente trabajo es más modesto: preguntarnos acerca del posible impacto de esta crisis mundial en las variables macroeconómicas. En este punto, resulta de interés señalar que se tropieza con un serio problema de identificación, porque el choque externo se produce con virulencia durante gran parte del año 2008 y en el mismo período también aumenta el riesgo idiosincrático argentino, principalmente por el conflicto agropecuario del primer semestre del año y, más recientemente, la eliminación del sistema previsional de capitalización, todo lo cual vuelve no previsible las políticas públicas, aumentando la incertidumbre

#### ACTIVIDADES

Haga un círculo en la opción correspondiente

	Verdadero (V)	Falso (F)	No dice (ND)
1. Los llamados productos tóxicos siempre fueron perjudiciales para la economía	V	F	ND
2. El autor propone una mayor intervención del gobierno sobre los mercados	V	F	ND
3. A partir del 2006 comienza a bajar las exportaciones agrícolas	V	F	ND
4. La recesión mundial presiona a la baja de los términos del intercambio	V	F	ND
5. El riesgo país en Argentina es, actualmente, uno de los más altos en América Latina	V	F	ND
6. El aumento del riesgo país se debe tanto a la crisis internacional como al mayor riesgo idiosincrático	V	F	ND
7. El autor considera extraño que se valore tanto el dólar como moneda a pesar de la crisis estadounidense	V	F	ND
8. La crisis del 2008 le confiere a Estados Unidos una desventaja importante.	V	F	ND
9. Las causas internas tienen un mayor peso que la crisis internacional	V	F	ND
10. El panorama para el 2009 es, en general, desfavorable ya que se detendría la creación de nuevos empleos.	V	F	ND

**Escriba las ideas principales en castellano no más de 2 oraciones del texto que acaba de leer. No olvide incluir los tres canales mencionados en el texto y la perspectiva económica general para la Argentina**

**Piense en las estrategias que utilizó para escribir las ideas principales del texto y responda las siguientes preguntas:**

¿Cuáles son las tres estrategias que lo ayudaron a comprender el texto?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuáles fueron los tres pasos más importantes que realizó para escribir las ideas principales?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

¿Cuáles fueron los tres pasos que realizó para evaluar su redacción de ideas principales?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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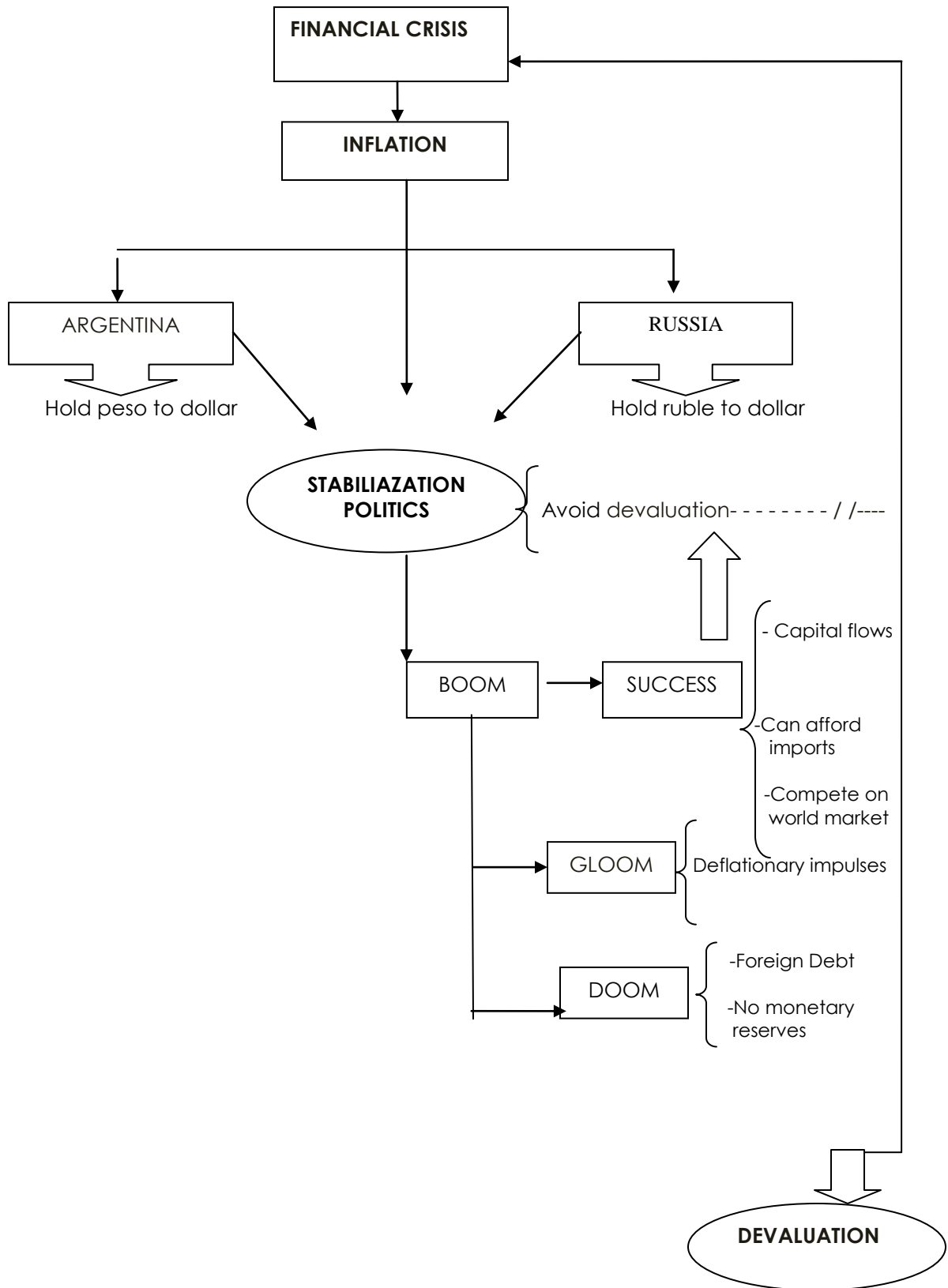
## Appendix C

### Cuestionario

Lea los siguientes ítems y circule la respuesta que mejor describe lo que Ud. hace cuando extrae la idea principal de un texto.

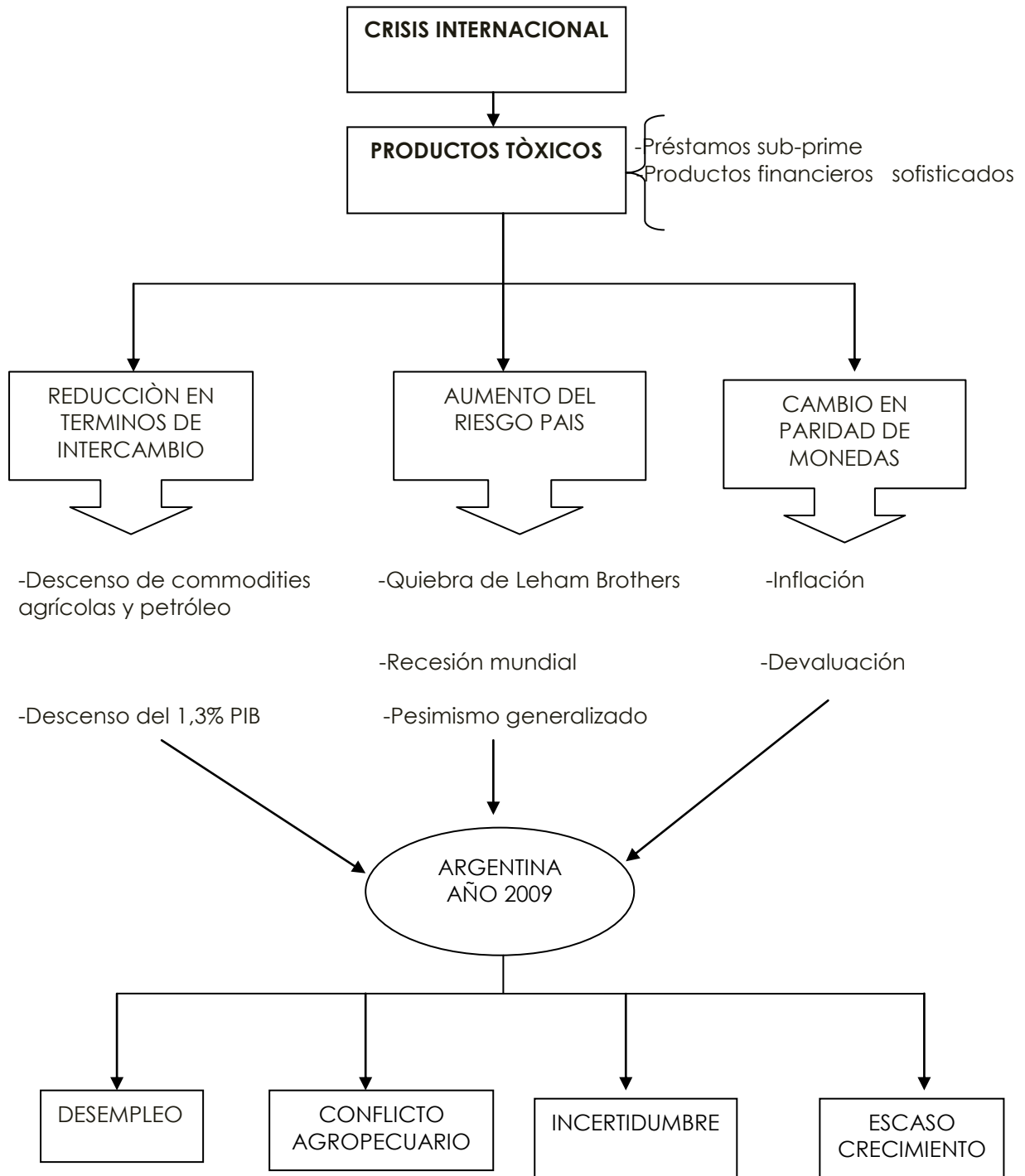
	Nunca	A veces	Casi siempre	Siempre
1. Trato de entender lo que debo sintetizar	1	2	3	4
2. Presto atención al los títulos	1	2	3	4
3. Busco los aspectos generales del texto	1	2	3	4
4. Busco información detallada y particular	1	2	3	4
5. Subrayo información en el texto	1	2	3	4
6. Escribo mis propias notas	1	2	3	4
7. Suelo focalizarme en ejemplos y detalles	1	2	3	4
8. Suelo focalizarme en el significado general de las oraciones	1	2	3	4
9. Presto atención a las palabras que rodean una palabra que no me es familiar	1	2	3	4
10. Trato de conectar la información que leo con mi conocimiento/experiencias previas	1	2	3	4
11. Determino qué partes del texto son importantes antes de redactor la idea principal	1	2	3	4
12. Escribo la idea principal con mis propias palabras	1	2	3	4
13. Identifico qué información me pide la actividad que debo realizar	1	2	3	4
14. Escribo un borrado antes de escribir la copia final de mi idea principal	1	2	3	4
15. Tengo más confianza en mi idea principal cuando uso textualmente las mismas palabras del autor	1	2	3	4
16. Trato de generalizar el texto cuando escribo la idea principal	1	2	3	4
17. Combino ideas de diferentes partes del texto cuando redacto la idea principal	1	2	3	4
18. Ordeno todas las ideas que extraigo del texto para que mi idea principal tenga un hilo conductor	1	2	3	4
19. Reviso que mi idea principal esté acorde con las demandas de la actividad	1	2	3	4
20. Reviso mi idea principal para asegurarme que no haya omitido información relevante	1	2	3	4
21. Reviso que mi idea principal se lea fluidamente	1	2	3	4
22. Corrijo los errores que logro identificar	1	2	3	4
23. Comparo que mi idea principal se asemeje al texto original	1	2	3	4
24. Reviso mi idea principal antes de entregarla	1	2	3	4

Main Idea of an English-written Text



Appendix E

Main idea of a Spanish-written Text



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## Difficulties in EFL abstract reading in the social sciences

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### ABSTRACT

Paratextual information provided by abstracts helps advance reading hypotheses of research articles, since abstracts are concise summaries of longer pieces of writing that focus on the most significant ideas covered. This paper analyses a corpus of abstracts from the fields of Arts and Applied Linguistics using the tools provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics in order to detect potential difficulties that university undergraduates may encounter while reading this text type. The analysis of the data proves that some abstracts do not include conclusions or results, and if they are included, they are not frequently marked by a conjunction of result. Modalization or lexis with negative connotation are frequently used to express researchers' opinions or rather, to dissimulate the fact that they are expressing them. There is also a strong disposition to use impersonality. Consequently, unexperienced readers may not be able to discover the different ways in which conclusions are presented.

**Keywords:** abstracts – conjunctions - strategic reading - modality

### INTRODUCTION

Second or foreign language reading is a complex object of study influenced by different types of interrelated variables: the reader, the text and the reading situation. The reading process is triggered by the text and the readers who may have different goals, so the decisions they make when facing a text will influence their selection of strategies, their comprehension, and the retrieval of the passage they have read. (Alderson, 2000; Grabe & Stoller, 2002)

In the reading comprehension courses in English at the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad de Buenos Aires, a model of academic text reading that responds to the tenets of a strategic, interactive reading approach is being developed. Students read academic texts and reformulate them in Spanish through main idea writing, paragraph conceptualization and outlining. The texts are chosen on the basis of their relevance to the fields of study, their text structure and their conceptual and / or lexical complexity rather than on the basis of their extension or syntactic difficulty. The model deems metacognition as a significant constituent in autonomous learning development. It contemplates four areas: *cognitive*, *linguistic*, *assessment*, and *culture* (Spath Hirschmann, 2000). In the cognitive component the pre-reading or anticipation step is of utmost importance. It is the moment when students advance hypotheses using the paratextual information the text provides and integrate it with their schemata. In the *linguistic area* special attention is given to focus on general academic vocabulary, conjunctions, noun phrases and different linguistic resources to express interpersonal meanings. As regards *assessment*, we consider metacognitive reflection and cooperative learning as important underpinnings of the process. The *cultural component* concentrates on the problems of ethnocentricity in the acquisition of cultural concepts.

Metacognitive awareness of reading strategies significantly contributes to L2 reading ability. According to Carrell (1989:129)

*Effective second language reading pedagogy must include not only training and practice in the use of task- specific strategies (i.e. strategy training), instruction in orchestrating, overseeing, and monitoring these skills (i.e. self-regulation training), but, more importantly, information about the significance and outcome of these skills and the range of their utility (i.e. awareness training).*

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Effective reading is gained not only by employing task-specific strategies, but also by the ability to use those strategies which are appropriate to the situation. In the reading comprehension process, organizational signal recognition plays an important role since it facilitates reading hypothesis construction. Abstracts are one of the examples of these signals (Lorch & Lorch, 1995, 1996)<sup>1</sup>. They are concise summaries of longer pieces of writing that focus on the most significant ideas covered. While they contain key words found in the larger work, abstracts are original documents rather than excerpted passages.

### Academic Texts

The aim of this paper was to analyse and compare a corpus of one hundred abstracts from the fields of Arts and Applied Linguistics in order to detect potential difficulties that university undergraduates with basic knowledge of the English language may encounter while reading abstracts in academic texts. We concentrated on the most frequent choices authors make to present their conclusions and recommendations. We consider that academic texts are those texts published in university journals or books used by graduates or undergraduate students. Although there are a large variety of academic texts in humanities and in the social sciences, a feature that characterizes them is that in this text type there are different lines of thought, ideas or frameworks which are compared, accepted or rejected by the writer. The researcher's aim is to achieve reader's acceptance of his stance, so, as a consequence of this context of production, academic texts show a high number of marks of the *interpersonal metafunction* (Halliday, 2004).

Halliday adopts a comprehensive approach towards language which is seen as a totality, so that whatever is said about one aspect is to be understood always with reference to the total picture. A language is a resource for making meaning which resides in systemic patterns of choice. The system of the language is instantiated in the form of text. Language builds human experience because it names things, designs, categories and taxonomies. These elements are configured into complex grammatical patterns and these figures can be built up into sequences related by time, cause, contrast and others. This is called the *ideational metafunction* in which we can distinguish two components: the *experiential* and the *logical aspect*. When we use language we are making sense of our experience but we are also enacting our personal and social relationships with people around us. This is called the *interpersonal metafunction*. The *textual metafunction* is concerned with the information flow or the way in which information is packaged into clauses, paragraphs and texts as a whole (Halliday, 2004).

The Mood system belongs to the *interpersonal metafunction* of the language and it is the grammatical resource to realize an interactive move. In the grammatical system of Mood we can make a basic distinction between *imperative* and *indicative* mood types. These different choices are determined by the changes in the speaker's role. The semantic categories of *statements, questions, commands* and *offers* are realized by the grammatical mood options *declarative, interrogative* and *imperative*. The interpersonal resources of *polarity* and *modality* are realized in the Mood element and they may be expressed either as a feature of the finite (*may, -n't*) or as a separate Mood adjunct (*not, perhaps*). Modality refers to the area of meaning that lies between positive and negative polarity. Speakers have many ways of expressing their opinions, or rather of dissimulating the fact they are expressing them. Apart from the use of modal verbs, a speaker or a writer may use what Halliday calls the interpersonal metaphor (Halliday, 2004). While the congruent realization of modality is a group within a clause (*I may go*), the metaphorical realization or interpersonal metaphor is a clause that projects (*I think I will go*) or embeds the clause to which a modal value is assigned (*It is probable that I will go*) (Halliday, 2004). The use of modality and interpersonal metaphor is a strategy for expanding the potential for negotiation.

Reading authentic academic texts at University proves difficult for undergraduate students because they are not used to textual and linguistic features of this text type. Thus, a thorough

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<sup>1</sup> Signals are writing devices that emphasize aspects of a text's content or structure without adding to the content of the text.



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analysis of these texts will allow teachers to develop pedagogical strategies to facilitate students' reading comprehension. One of these strategies is to make students aware of the fact that abstracts are organizational signals which are useful in the pre-reading step because they describe or give information about the content of a research article.

#### *Abstracts in academic texts*

The APA (American Psychological Association) style guide remarks that the purpose of abstracts is to provide a brief and comprehensive summary of what will be developed in the text. Generally, abstracts include a brief description of the problem being investigated, the methods used, the results and their implications. Two types of abstracts are mainly considered: *descriptive abstracts* and *informative abstracts*. The first type does not provide research results or conclusions nor does it make judgments about the work. Descriptive abstracts are frequently used to present academic events. *Informative abstracts* present and explain the main arguments developed in the article, results and methods. They also include the research conclusions and the author's recommendation (Day, 1995). In these abstracts four moves may be distinguished, the author's intention, the thesis or hypothesis, the description of methodology, the summary and interpretation of results, and inferences drawn by the researcher (Botto, Briones, Sastre and Fortuny, 2001).

In general, *informative abstracts* are used in research articles and they are considered organizational signals. Also, the discipline abstracts belong to, influences the choice of their structure and rhetorical devices (Hyland, 2000).

### **METHODOLOGY**

We decided to group fifty abstracts from the field of Arts from different journals and fifty from the field of Applied Linguistics published in the journal *Reading in a Foreign Language*, according to the two categories suggested by Day. Since we were interested in finding out what linguistic resources researchers use to express research conclusions and recommendations, we decided to work with informative abstracts because this is the type which includes the researcher's conclusions and sometimes their recommendation. In the Applied Linguistic corpus we found forty informative abstracts, whereas in Arts journals we found thirty.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

#### *a- Use of conjunctions to introduce results*

In the Applied Linguistic corpus we found eleven descriptive abstracts and thirty nine informative, whereas in the field of Arts we found twenty descriptive abstracts and thirty informative abstracts.

Results showed researchers had selected a conjunction to introduce a conclusion on very few occasions: in eight abstracts out of thirty (26.67%) in the field of Arts and in only one (2.56%) in the field of Linguistics. A closer analysis demonstrated that in the field of Arts in three cases (10%) researchers had used concessive conjunctions to present the limitations of results. The selected items to indicate conclusions were *thus*, *therefore* – which were selected twice each – and *thereby*. The chosen conjunctions to indicate concession were *however*, *although* and *while*. On the other hand, in the field of Linguistics, the only conjunction used was *thus*.

The following table shows the comparison between the two corpora:

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According to Lorch and Lorch, organizational signals include a variety of writing devices designed to emphasize the structure of an expository text such as headings, topical overviews, topical summaries and others.

Total		Connectors				Absence of connectors	
		Result		Concession			
Arts	30	5	16,67%	3	10%	22	73.33%
Linguistics	39	1	2.56%	0		38	97.44%

Table 1: use of conjunctions to introduce results and limitations of the study

The following examples are taken from the abstracts we worked with:

- 1- Use of a connector that indicates **result** or **effect**:

In his magisterial *Lagrima di San Pietro* (1595) Orlando di Lasso composed a cycle of 20 madrigals on texts by Luigi Tansillo on the theme of St Peter's denial of Christ and his subsequent remorse, capped by a Latin motet ('Vide homo') representing the rebuke of the crucified Christ. The *Lagrima* may be seen as a penitential gesture on Lasso's part, but a textual and musical analysis also suggests numerous parallels with contemporary Catholic spiritual exercises, particularly those of Ignatius of Loyola and Luis of Granada. The cycle **thus** takes its place in a broader Counter-Reformation discourse of meditation and penance.

Fisher, Alexander J. "Per mia particolare devotione': Orlando di Lasso's *Lagrima di San Pietro* and Catholic Spirituality in Counter-Reformation Munich" in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Volume 132, Part 2, 2007.

In the above example, the conjunction *thus* introduces the author's conclusion regarding the context in which the "cycle of madrigals" takes place.

This study investigates the effect of timed reading (TR) and repeated oral reading (RR) on 35 adult students of English as a foreign language. Students in the TR ( $n = 18$ ) and RR ( $n = 17$ ) groups read 52 and 26 passages respectively over a 13-week period. Reading rates and comprehension levels were measured at three occasions: pre-intervention, post-intervention, and delayed post-intervention. The reading rate results show that the TR group increased 50 (49%) words per minute (wpm) and 23 wpm (27%) for the RR group. The rate gains of both groups were largely retained after six weeks with no further instructional practice. In terms of comprehension levels, the TR group scored 53%, 67%, and 63%, and the RR group 53%, 60%, and 53% at the pretest, posttest and delayed posttest respectively. Overall, increasing the reading amount for the TR group improved reading rates and comprehension; increasing the reading rate for the RR group did not have a negative impact on reading comprehension. **Thus**, it is worthwhile including reading ratebuildup activities in L2 reading instruction.

Chang, A. "Improving reading rate activities for EFL students: Timed reading and repeated oral reading" in *Reading in a Foreign Language*. Volume 24, Number 1, April 2012

The conjunction *thus* in this case introduces the author's recommendation as regards the importance of including "reading ratebuildup activities in L2 instruction".

1. Use of a connector that indicates **concession**:

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This article is about the ways in which young people who have disengaged from learning in school can find a way back through leadership activities in art. It is based on a project which was funded by a small grant from the Wallenberg Foundation. The project explored the potential of an approach to developing positive leadership qualities in pupils who were not consistently committed to the school's learning purposes. This account describes and comments upon two pupils' guided attempts at peer teaching in art and its subsequent effect upon their self-esteem and attitude towards school. It was found that pupils who taught art to other pupils had an increased sense of self-worth and were more positively affected towards learning. **However**, broader issues, such as the negative nature of some school systems and their role in de-motivating pupils were highlighted.

Hickman, R. "Raising Pupils' Self-Esteem through Leadership Activities in Art" in *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, Volume 25 Issue 3, October 2006.

In this case, the conclusion begins when the researcher points out the positive aspects of the experience. He remarks that "*it was found that pupils who taught art to other pupils had an increased sense of self-worth and were more positively affected towards learning*". In the following sentence introduced by *however*, he remarks there are negative aspects of some school systems that are highlighted in the paper.

b- Other lexicogrammatical resources used in conclusions

As a second step in our analysis, we decided to see what other linguistic devices were used in the presentation of conclusions. The following table shows the results of our corpus analysis.

1- Presence of the researcher  
Arts

In the corpus belonging to Arts, the researcher appears explicitly through the use of the first person singular (pronoun I) only in two abstracts.

Far from being always unjustly neglected until the late twentieth century, as a recent view would have it, Berlioz's music enjoyed dedicated attention and considerable admiration a century earlier. His orchestral works, in particular, were taken up by a range of skilful players and conductors in Britain from the 1870s, yielding performances in the English regions, the London suburbs and in Scotland that impressed ordinary listeners much more than many experienced ones. **I argue** that structural change and professional competition within the British concert industry to 1920 assisted this remarkable reception – largely ignored in the historiography of Berlioz's reputation as well as in that of British musical culture – while imaginative musicians, astute promoters, writers and thousands of listeners continued to benefit from contact with his work. Berlioz's challenging music indeed became an agent of aesthetic change in Britain – a benchmark, and a calling-card, of modern orchestral presentation that was both standard and commonly accessible before the First World War.

Langley, L. "Agency and Change: Berlioz in Britain, 1870–1920" in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, Volume 132, Part 2, 2007

The use of the first person singular and the mental process **argue** introduce the researcher's voice, who explains why Berlioz's music enjoyed attention and admiration in Britain.

In the rest of the corpus the researcher disappears and his voice is replaced by the noun phrases *the work*, *the evidence*, *this reading*, *the article*, *the analysis*, generally followed by a mental process. Some examples found in the corpus are: *this work shows...*, *internal and external evidence supports.....*, *this reading can temper.....*, *the analysis shows.....*

In three abstracts the passive voice is used to avoid the personal pronoun *I* or *we*:

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The early nineteenth century witnessed vast changes in the aesthetics of music and the relationship of musicians to their art. Changing depictions of musical inspiration are iconographically traced through the progression from the ancient Greek conception of the "external" Muse or higher power, to the Romanticized formation of musical inspiration as being "internal". From the early part of the Romantic era, and particularly with Beethoven, portraits of musicians gradually move to an emphasis on the inner power of the composer as the prime mover behind the creation of music, by a concentration on the sitter him/herself, rather than the Classical convention of directing the sitter's gaze heavenward to some outer (and greater) influence. This shift correlates well with the nineteenth century's individualist focus on the Romantic artist as hero. Thus, tangible parallels **are drawn** between visual representations of musicians and broader aesthetic movements, which is valuable to an expanded understanding of contemporaneous attitudes to what musical inspiration was, and how it related to the composer.

Johnson-Hill, E. "Romanticism, the Classical Muse, and the Beethovenian Gaze: A Changing Iconography of Musical Inspiration", in *Music in Art, International Journal for Music Iconography*, Vol. XXXIII/1-2, 2008.

In this abstract, it is said that parallels between visual representations of musicians and broader aesthetic movements **are drawn** but the human agent that develops these parallels is not mentioned.

*Applied Linguistics*

The first person is used in two abstracts from the field of Applied Linguistics.

We explore the relationship between second language (L2) learners' vocabulary size, lexical text coverage that their vocabulary provides and their reading comprehension. We also conceptualize "adequate reading comprehension" and look for the lexical threshold for such reading in terms of coverage and vocabulary size. Vocabulary size was measured by the Levels Test, lexical coverage by the newest version of Vocabulary Profile and reading comprehension by a standardized national test. Results show that small increments of vocabulary knowledge contribute to reading comprehension even though they hardly improve text coverage. **We** suggest two thresholds: an optimal one, which is the knowledge of 8,000 word families yielding the coverage of 98% (including proper nouns) and a minimal one, which is 4,000–5,000 word families resulting in the coverage of 95% (including proper nouns).

Laufer, B. and Ravenhorst-Kalovski, G. "Lexical threshold revisited: Lexical text coverage, learners' vocabulary size and reading comprehension" in *Reading in a Foreign Language* Vol. 22, N° 1, April 2010.

In this example the researchers use the first person plural and the mental process *suggest* to introduce two possible and extreme thresholds of vocabulary knowledge that are necessary for reading comprehension.

In the rest of the corpus, the first person is replaced by phrases such as *this study, the results, the findings, this paper, data from this study, this paper, this analysis*. These nouns are associated with processes that refer to research work: *results revealed/ indicated/ suggested/ demonstrate/ show/ conclude/ support the idea...., findings suggest/ indicate ...., this study explores/ investigates/ found/ confirmed/ concludes/ discusses, the analysis indicates*.

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This study investigates the vocabulary learning opportunities in an ELT course book designed for upper-intermediate learners. All the words appearing in the 12 chapters of the text were analyzed. **The results suggest** that the text would provide opportunities to deepen knowledge of the second 1,000 most frequent words in English, and would provide a context for pre-teaching of academic words met in the text for learners on an academic pathway. **The results also suggest** that the text would provide minimal opportunities for learners to develop vocabulary knowledge beyond high frequency and academic words. **The findings suggest** a need to supplement use of such texts with an extensive reading program and other forms of language rich input to promote vocabulary development.

Matsuoka, W. and Hirsch, D. "Vocabulary learning through reading: Does an ELT course book provide good opportunities?" in *Reading in a Foreign Language* Vol. 22, N° 1, April 2010.

In this abstract, the noun phrases *the results* and *the findings* and the process *suggest* are used to introduce the conclusions drawn from the analysis of vocabulary learning opportunities in an ELT course book.

The passive voice is used in six abstracts to avoid the use of a first person pronoun representing the researcher.

Grouping words into meaningful chunks is a fundamental process for fluent reading. The present study is an attempt to understand the relationship between chunking and second language (L2) reading fluency. The effects of text segmentation on comprehension, rate, and regression in L2 reading were investigated using a self-paced reading task in a moving-window condition. The participants were intermediate and advanced level Japanese EFL learners. The difficulty of chunking a text negatively affected comprehension and smoothness for the intermediate learners, while the advanced learners were able to overcome chunking difficulty. In this study, although the negative effects of chunking difficulty **were observed**, the positive effects of assisting chunking **were not clearly detected**, which **was interpreted** as suggesting that the relationship between chunking and reading **needs to be considered** in light of the complex interplay between text difficulty and different aspects of reading.

Yamashita, J. and Ichikawa S. "Examining reading fluency in a foreign language: Effects of text segmentation on L2 readers" in *Reading in a Foreign Language* Vol. 22, N° 2, October 2010.

In this abstract, several instances of the use of the passive voice can be observed in the section where conclusions are presented: *were observed*, *were not clearly detected*, *was interpreted*, *needs to be considered*.

## 2- Lexicogrammatical units that instantiate interpersonal meanings

### Arts

In general, researchers express their conclusions using the positive polarity. Only in a few cases do they resort to the use of modal verbs or to the interpersonal metaphor. In the abstracts that correspond to Arts journals, modal verbs are used in eight conclusions.

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While Don Giovanni has fascinated posterity, the Commendatore perhaps resonated more deeply with Mozart's age. Living statues haunted the late Enlightenment imagination, expressing, among other values, the new primacy of touch. For post-Cartesian thinkers, touch supplanted reason as the bedrock of cognition and aesthetics. Touch plays the same veridical role in Giovanni, above all in the famous handshake of Giovanni and the Commendatore. Three scenes are analyzed, illuminated by the psychological theory of Berkeley, Condillac, and Herder. Zerlina's 'Vedrai carino' traces an integrative path from sight to touch. Her discourse recedes from conventional poetic and musical rhetoric into more immediate bodily representations. In 'La' ci darem la mano', conversely, music and poetry grow increasingly stylized as the false taking of hands proceeds. The banquet scene enacts another integration of representation and reality, as the Commendatore forces Giovanni to engage an older linguistic paradigm. This reading, grounded in the senses and signs, **can temper** more allegorical readings.

Rumph, S. "The Sense of Touch in 'Don Giovanni'" in *Music and Letters, An International Journal of Musical scholarship*; Volume 88, Number 4, 2007.

In this abstract, the writer uses modality to indicate the possibility of other allegorical meanings. In three abstracts (N° 19, 21, and 29) the interpersonal metaphor explicitly objective<sup>2</sup> is selected by the writer. The phrases used are: *it is quite possible, it is indeed possible, it also seems evident.*

Since the early 1970s, the TV has been incorporated into the art world by artists such as Nam June Paik and members of the Fluxus group. It is now commonplace within the art world to place a TV in an art gallery and call it 'art.' But while the TV has attained this prestigious place within the art world, interestingly, it hitherto has remained an outsider to contemporary circles of philosophical inquiry. Gathering our inspiration from Nam June Paik's *Egg Grows*, **it is indeed possible to form** a hermeneutic description of the TV as having an aesthetic value that speaks to our postmodern world: a world where notions of metaphysical truth, being and identity are deconstructed and replaced with an emphasis on flux, becoming and subjective perspectives.

DiTommaso, T "The Aesthetics of Television" in *e- Journal of Art and Technology* <http://crossings.tcd.ie/issues/3.1> ISSN 1649-0460 December 2003.

In this abstract, the writer remarks the possibility of developing a hermeneutic description of TV using the construction *it is indeed possible.*

#### *Applied Linguistics*

In this corpus, modals are used in five abstracts when researchers present the conclusions of their work.

The aim of the present study was to examine the relationship between spelling knowledge and reading skills among a group of 16 intermediate-level Arab learners of English as a second language (ESL) and a corresponding comparison group of 21 intermediate-level ESL learners in an English for academic purposes (EAP) program. A spelling task was used to assess the English orthographic or spelling knowledge, and standardized reading and listening tests were used to assess the general language processing and comprehension skills of the two groups. The results of the tests indicated that the Arab and non-Arab ESL students were not significantly different in listening (or auding) comprehension, but that the Arab students scored significantly lower on the spelling test and the reading comprehension test. This study discusses possible reasons why Arab ESL learners **may exhibit** difficulties with English spelling and then discusses the link between spelling knowledge and the development of reading fluency.

Fender, M "Spelling knowledge and reading development: Insights from Arab ESL learners" in *Reading in a Foreign Language*, Vol. 20, N° 1, 2008.

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<sup>2</sup> In order to state explicitly that the probability is subjective or to claim explicitly that the probability is objective, the speaker construes the proposition as a projection and encodes the subjectivity (*I think*) or the objectivity (*It is likely*) in a projecting clause.



The use of the modal verb **may** allows the writer to present possible reasons for spelling difficulties ESL Arab learners have.

In this field, researchers use lexicogrammatical units with negative connotation in two cases (37- 19)

Opportunities for incidental vocabulary acquisition were explored in a 121,000-word corpus of teacher talk addressed to advanced adult learners of English as a second language (ESL) in a communicatively-oriented conversation class. In contrast to previous studies that relied on short excerpts, the corpus contained all of the teacher speech the learners were exposed to during a 9-week session. Lexical frequency profiling indicated that with knowledge of 4,000 frequent words, learners would be able to understand 98% of the tokens in the input. The speech contained hundreds of words likely to have been unfamiliar to the learners, but far fewer were recycled the numbers of times research shows are needed for lasting retention. The study concludes that attending to teacher speech is an **inefficient** method for acquiring knowledge of the many frequent words learners need to know, especially since many words used frequently in writing are **unlikely** to be encountered **at all**.

Horst, M. "How well does teacher talk support incidental vocabulary acquisition?" in *Reading in a Foreign Language*, Vol 22, N° 1, April 2010.

In this abstract, the researcher avoids the use of negative polarity by selecting units that carry negative connotation: *Inefficient, unlikely, at all*.

Sometimes, researchers include recommendations in abstracts. In our corpus, there are authorial recommendations in two abstracts in Arts journals and six in the Applied Linguistics journals. In the former, researchers use modals to present their recommendations whereas in the latter modal verbs are avoided.

The following tables summarize the results of our analysis:

Field	Total	Human agent		Absence of human agent			
		1 <sup>st</sup> person	%	Noun phrase	%	Passive voice	%
Arts	30	2	6.66%	28	93.33%	3	10%
Linguistics	40	2	5%	38	95%	6	15%

Table 2: Presence and absence of the researcher

Field	Total	Modal verbs		Interpersonal metaphor		Units with negative connotation	
Arts	30	8	26.67%	3	10%	0	0%
Linguistics	40	5	12.5%	0	0%	2	5%

Table 3: Interpersonal resources of modality.

## DISCUSSION

Results show that only in five abstracts out of thirty in Arts journals and in one out of forty in Linguistics, researchers selected a connector that indicates result or effect to introduce a conclusion. Besides, researchers practically do not choose the negative polarity; on the



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contrary, they select positive polarity more frequently. However, in most cases they prefer to use other grammatical resources to express their opinions such as the use of modals, of interpersonal metaphors, and lexicogrammatical units that carry evaluation.

## PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Reading strategies are of interest not only for what they reveal about the ways readers manage their interactions with written texts, but also for how the use of strategies is related to effective reading comprehension.

We are using the term "strategies" rather than the term "skills", aligning with Patricia Carrell, to focus on the actions that readers actively select and control to achieve desired goals or objectives. According to Paris, Wasik and Turner, skills are applied to a text unconsciously while strategies are selected deliberately. However, a skill can become a strategy when it is used intentionally, and a strategy can become a skill. "Indeed strategies are more efficient and developmentally advanced when they become generated and applied automatically as skills. Thus, strategies are "skills under consideration" (Paris, S. G., Wasik, B. A., & Turner, J. C., 1991).

Reading strategy use reflects both metacognition and motivation, because readers need to have both the knowledge and the disposition to use strategies. Accordingly, students should be trained in strategies that will help them find what resources researchers use to introduce conclusions because very few abstracts in our corpus contain the conclusion of the work introduced by a connector. Connectors can be easily focused by our students as well as modal verbs when they have been trained to recognize them but students should be aware of the fact that there are other resources that are not so easy to recognize and that are important to see the authors' contributions to their fields of study. If students can recognize the presentation of the researcher's findings in their abstracts, they will probably advance better specific hypotheses which will guide them in their propositional reading and their personal reconstruction of the text.

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## ARTESOL ESP E-journal - Submission guidelines

ARTESOLESP E-journal receives submissions of unpublished manuscripts on any topic related to the area of ESP. Four categories of manuscripts will be received: contributions, research articles, pedagogical experiences in ESP, and reviews.

Each manuscript must include the names, affiliation, and e-mail addresses of all authors. A brief biographical statement (maximum 100 words, in sentence format) for each author is required. (This information will be removed when the articles are distributed for blind review.) All manuscripts may be submitted in the following formats: Microsoft Word documents or RTF documents.

### Contributions

In this section, articles by prestigious ESP specialists will be published.

### Research Articles

This is a section devoted to the publication of research articles which will be refereed by our Academic Editorial Board.

- Articles should report original research.
- Full-length articles should be no more than 5,500 words in length, excluding appendices.
- Each submission should include an abstract of no more than 150 words, and a list of five to seven keywords. All article manuscripts submitted to *ARTESOLESP Journal* will go through a two-step review process.
- Biodata of the author (s) should be included. (No more than 70 words)
- **All manuscripts should follow APA style.**

Research articles should generally include the following sections:

1- Abstract

2- Five to seven keywords.

3- The introduction includes:

- The research issue
- The underlying theoretical framework.
- A description of the methodological tradition in which the study was conducted.
- Research hypotheses or questions.

4- Method section:

- Description of participants and research context.
- A detailed description of data collection and analysis procedures.
- Description of the apparatus or materials used.
- Explanation of the procedures and the steps in the research

5- Results section:

- Presentation of graphs and tables that help to explain the results.
- For quantitative research, presentation of descriptive and inferential statistics used to analyze the data.
- For qualitative research, data should reflect prolonged engagement, observation, and triangulation.

6- Discussion section:

- An evaluation and interpretation of the results.
- Discussion of alternative explanations.
- Causal inferences should be cautiously made.
- Results of the study should not be overly interpreted or generalized.
- Linking the results obtained in the study to original hypotheses.
- Presentation of the implications and any limitations of the study.

7- Conclusion:

- Summary and general implications of the study.
- Suggestions for further research.

8- References in APA format.

9- Appendices of instrument(s) used.

### Pedagogical experiences in ESP

This section includes the description of organization and development of new courses using ESP.

Manuscripts should report original pedagogical experiences: teaching techniques and

- Methodologies, management of different teaching situations, testing and assessment, materials development.
- Full-length articles should be no more than **5,500 words** in length, excluding appendices.
- Each submission should include an abstract of no more than 150 words, and a list of five to seven keywords.
- A biodata of the author (s) should be included. (No more than **70 words**)
- *All manuscripts should follow APA style.*

### Reviews

This section includes reviews of books and journals published by Universities, Teacher Training Colleges and other institutions interested in the development of ESP courses or studies.

Reviews of individual books, journals or reading instructional software should not be longer than 1,600 words. The following information should be included at the beginning of the review:

- \* Author(s)
- \* Title
- \* Publication date
- \* Publisher
- \* Publisher City and Country
- \* Number of pages
- \* Biodata of the author (s) should be included. (No more than 70 words)

ARTESOLESP Journal follows the guidelines of the fifth edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association published by the American Psychological Association (APA) in 2001. Manuscripts submitted to *ESP Journal* must conform to APA format.

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Submissions that meet the requirements stated above will be sent out for peer review from two to three experts in the field. This second review process takes 2–3 months. When this process is finished, the authors will receive copies of the external reviewers' comments and will be notified as to the decision (acceptance, acceptance with changes, or rejection).

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