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“READING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE AND THE FACTORS THAT STUDENTS OF ENGLISH PEDAGOGY OF THE UCSC PERCEIVE AS DIFFICULTIES WHILE READING FICTION.”

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Supervising Teacher: Matthew J. Sinclair

Researchers: Belén Bastías Molina

Daniel Gallardo Pedreros

Cynthia Lara Salazar

Rubén Marcos Velásques

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Daniel Gallardo Pedreros

“Distinta es la actitud frente a la vida y a las cosas cuando la revelación interna hiere como el rayo.

Siguiendo los pasos lentamente, meditando lo dicho y lo por decir aún, puedes convertir el sin-sentido en sentido. No es indiferente lo que hagas con tu vida. Tu vida, sometida a leyes, está expuesta ante posibilidades a escoger. Yo no te hablo de libertad. Te hablo de liberación, de movimiento, de proceso. No te hablo de libertad como algo quieto, sino de liberarse paso a paso como se va liberando del necesario camino recorrido el que se acerca a su ciudad. Entonces, «lo que se debe hacer» no depende de una moral lejana, incomprensible y convencional, sino de leyes: leyes de vida, de luz, de evolución.” Silo.

Rubén Marcos Velásquez

Abstract

The following study reflects the perceived difficulties of the students of English Pedagogy at UCSC regarding reading comprehension in English as a second language, where cultural, literary and linguistic aspects emerge in the results of each instrument applied. Based on the Threshold Theory, in which students must have a certain level of knowledge in a second language, three instruments were created, including a survey that presents the reading habits of the participants in different areas, such as the frequency of reading, preferences of literary genre and the difficulties they perceive at the moment of reading a text. Additionally, two texts are used to gather information about reading comprehension in the strict sense, finishing with a semi-structured interview that shows students' post-reading reflections.

Finally, within the results there is a concordance in the difficulties of the participants, where the vocabulary is the main factor seen as preventing reading comprehension. However, different nuances are appreciated according to the results concerning the type of vocabulary involved.

Key words: Reading Comprehension, Threshold Theory, Literary, Cultural and language Elements, Vocabulary.

Resumen

El presente estudio refleja las dificultades de los estudiantes de la carrera Pedagogía en Inglés de la UCSC en la comprensión de lectura del inglés como segunda lengua, donde aspectos culturales, literarios y lingüísticos se manifiestan en los resultados de cada instrumento aplicado. Basándose en la teoría de los umbrales, que describe que los estudiantes deben tener un cierto grado de conocimiento en la segunda lengua, se crearon tres instrumentos, entre los cuales se encuentran una encuesta, que revela los hábitos de lectura de los participantes en distintos ámbitos, como la frecuencia de lectura, preferencia en cuanto a géneros literarios y las dificultades que ellos perciben al leer un texto. Adicionalmente dos textos son utilizados para recoger información de comprensión de lectura propiamente tal para finalizar con una entrevista semi-estructurada que arroja las reflexiones de los participantes post-lectura.

Finalmente, dentro de los resultados se encuentra una concordancia en las dificultades de los participantes, donde el vocabulario es el principal factor que impide la comprensión de lectura. Sin embargo, diferentes matices se aprecian de acuerdo a los resultados, referente al tipo de vocabulario involucrado.

Palabras clave: Comprensión de lectura, Teoría de los umbrales, Elementos Literarios, Culturales, Elementos de Lenguaje y Vocabulario.

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CHAPTER I: PROBLEM ANALYSIS

1.1. Problemanalysis

Regarding first language reading comprehension and its importance in the educational context, it can be said that Chile suffers from low levels of motivation for reading, not only because it has the most expensive tax in the world (Cámara Chilena del Libro) for buying books but also because its deficient quality of education, in fact according to Consejo de la Cultura y el Centro de Microdatos de la Universidad de Chile (2011) the 84% of chilean people do not understand what they read.

An outlook about reading in English as a second language is not very different, according to educarchile web page that belongs to MINEDUC, the results of English SIMCE in 2010 revealed that only one out of ten students of 3° medio, got a certification, which means that they reached a level corresponding to B1 of the Common European Framework of References for Languages. SIMCE test has also demonstrated what was previously mentioned about the low education quality, due to the factor that considering the richest 20% of the population, the 83% of them are able to receive one of those certifications, while taking into account the poorest 20%, only the 0, 8% could eventually receive one.

Considering the former points, the students that choose to study English pedagogy face difficulties accomplishing their tasks due to the minimal knowledge acquired during school life. Consequently, this situation is directly related to reading comprehension because it is one of the skills that not only needs formal instruction but also is the earliest required skill in academic life.

1.2. Justification:

Reading comprehension instruction is normally composed of strategies to get vocabulary, main ideas and even for comparisons within and between different texts. Nonetheless, the complexity of reading comprehension is that it relies on the reader, because the understanding of what is being read is a personal and internal task, and it can be modified according to the experiences the reader has had. In this matter, Holden (2004) suggests that reading is the entrance to personal development and to social, economic and civil life. Henceforth a definition given by The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2003), says that “people cannot be active or informed citizens unless they can read. Reading is a prerequisite for almost all cultural and social activities” from this argument, it is possible to derive that reading is a fundamental aspect to achieve an integral person, therefore a better society.

In this field, is important to consider reading not only as an academic matter but also as a recreational pathway, and consequently the importance of reading for pleasure, because readers are expected to connect their own emotions to the printed page in order to reach the required understanding.

1.3. Research Question

What are the factors perceived by the students that interfere in the process of reading comprehension?

1.4. General Objective

To recognize and define the factors that students perceive as a difficulty in reading fiction in an L2.

1.5. Specific objectives:

- 1-To identify the reading habits of the subjects
- 2- To recognize the difficulties perceived by students regarding literary, cultural and language elements

1.6 Hypothesis

This research aims to recognize students' perceptions in terms of reading comprehension of fiction stories; as well as, identify the main difficulties that students face at the moment of reading a book in L2.

It is assumed that the subjects have experience in extensive reading, due to the activities they have to accomplish as academic activities.

CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Definition of Reading Comprehension

To define Reading Comprehension has been a challenge throughout history; hence it has been defined in many ways over the years.

Nutall (1996) declares that the main purpose of reading is related to obtaining the correct message from a text, the message the writer intended for the reader to receive. Armbruster et al. (2001) defines reading comprehension as the process of making meaning from the written text. In the same direction Anderson (1999) notes that reading is an active and fluent process that involves the interaction between the reader and the reading material for building meaning.

Glucksberg (2001) shows that reading is commonly viewed as an interaction between the reader and the printed page, this understanding is given by different factors. When students read they have to combine at least two types of comprehension, the first one which is literal and based on the understanding of what the text says and the second one that is inferential which is related to the understanding of what the text is about.

The reading comprehension has many facets that can be mentioned in order to understand each factor or element that contributes or hinders a satisfactory comprehension. However, the idea of reading as an important base to link different topics and social realities is complemented by the consequences of reading for pleasure, as it helps to increase “general knowledge” (e.g. Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998) which is related to the idea of an integral understanding of knowledge; It contributes to a “better comprehension of other cultures” (Meek, 1991), being able to be aware of the myriad of realities, contexts and customs, avoiding the negative conceptions such as racism, xenophobia or discrimination of minorities. Being aware of others, motivates people to take part of social communities increasing the participation and the constant appetite for being informed and broad their minds.

There are many ways to distinguish the positive effects of reading for pleasure as a tool for a better comprehension of texts and social issues. It can be mentioned that reading for pleasure takes an important role on the reader’s development in terms of personal aspects providing “a greater insight into human nature and decision-making” (Bruner, 1996).

According to Pearson and Johnson (1978) there are three main basic types of questions regarding to the assessment of reading comprehension; firstly, explicit questions which are those that readers can find textually written in the text, secondly there are implicit questions, that involve a mingle between what the text says and the student’s background knowledge and finally scripturally implicit questions whose answers depend entirely on students or reader’s prior knowledge. Hence it can be said that the amount of dependence that the students have in the text

itself decreases when the questions become higher and deeper in terms of inferences. In this way as inferences come from schemas or background knowledge, the correct inference cannot be executed without investigating the Schema Theory that shows the importance of inferencing in comprehension which is based on the prior knowledge of the reader (Fincher and Kiefer 1992).

According to Day and Park (2005) the idea of reading has changed and moved from what was considered a receptive skill and process to what is now an interactive process, because meaning does not dwell on the printed page. In other words it can be said that reading combines the words on the printed page with the reader's background knowledge and experiences. A prerequisite for satisfactory communication is that reader and writer should share the same code.

Reading requires various mental operations to be performed; it is multileveled, it means that the student can use a wide range of levels of language simultaneously such as graphophonic, syntactic, semantic levels amongst others (Goodman, 1970). Reading can be done by using a number of processes and strategies that can be divided into two main categories: The first one is bottom-up processing, which means that the meaning of the whole text is reconstructed from the letters and words of the text, thus ,the goals of the bottom-up approach are the automatic word recognition and rapid reading rate, the second is referred to the ability of the reader to look the text as a unit, and then to associate it into his or her preexisting knowledge base. In this sense, in the words of Grabe (2009) top-down reading strategies contain predicting, inferring, and focusing on meanings.

2.2 Schema Theory Research

The acquisition of meaning from a text is made through the analysis of words and sentences, the meaning that this could share with us is given by the personal knowledge the learners have according to their own experiences, which are conditioned by a myriad of variables

such as race, occupation or religion, among others. This means that the way in which learners understand a text depends on their culture. Following this idea, Miller (2006) says that “when readers make predictions about what they’ll learn, they activate their schema about the topic and what they know about the type of text they are about to read”, moreover, Collins and Mangieri (2006) stated that, in order to learn and comprehend the information from a book, it is necessary to make concrete and personal connections to a specific word.

According to the National Reading Panel’s (NICHD, 2001) data, when students face new words often and in several ways, they can improve their vocabulary range, it means that there is a significant effect on the development of reading vocabulary.

Brown, D. (2000) cites Clare and Silberstein (1977:136-37) who capture the essence of this process by declaring: “Research has shown that reading is only incidentally visual. More information is contributed by the reader than by the printed page.” It can be noticed that this mental representation called “Schema Theory” (Bartlett, 1932; Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983) gives the reader the possibility to harmonize something that they know in advance. This means that the readers use their previous knowledge to provide meaning to a text and comprehend it because they have “preexisting knowledge structures stored in their minds” (Nassaji, 2002, p. 444). In our mind the words are associated with different ways not only by the form but also the meaning. When reading or listening to a word, immediately we think in a word with the same meaning, the opposite or a series of related words. These associations vary according to the cultural and vital experience of every single person. Harmer (2001) declares that those typical situations people come across have some mental representations, when learners are stimulated by particular structures, they are capable of distinguishing what they hear or see because it fits into patterns they already know. These schemata gives the readers the possibility of predicting the form of the text and the subject of it. Schemata could be divided into three main groups, the first one and more frequently referred to is formal schema or textual schema, and it is related to the language

knowledge and linguistic codes, it also includes the knowledge with regard to organization of texts and characteristics about a specific genre. According to Carrell (1987, p. 464). Research into formal schema suggests that “texts with familiar rhetorical organization should be easier to read and comprehend than texts with unfamiliar rhetorical organization”.

The second group is called Content Schema and it is described by Carrell (1983) as the content knowledge, which can be divided into two types, the prior knowledge that refers to the knowledge that can or not be relevant to the context of a particular text and the subject matter knowledge that according to Alderson (2000) is directly related to the text content and topic.

The third type of schema is cultural schema (Yule, 1996). It has also received some other names such as abstract schema (Nassaji, 2002; Oller, 1995), story schema (Mandler, 1984), or linguistic schema (Ketchum, 2006). It is referred to the importance that a cultural membership has to comprehend completely the meaning intended by the writer.

2.2.1 Problems with Schema Theory Research

The major problem when analyzing the role of cultural background knowledge in L2 is regarding instrument-based factors, due to the validity issues in measurement. As Steffensen et al (1979) states, texts are normally simplified or specifically developed for research purposes; consequently, readers do not have the possibility to use their abstract schemas for making richer inferences. In addition to this, Carrell (1988) notes that the effect of this specific knowledge is generally revised by using two texts which are equivalent, not only linguistically but also rhetorically. Thus, those simplified texts might be based on readability formulas mixed with subjective judgments, due to the overlook in the levels of abstraction, density and complexity of concepts, vocabulary differences between L1 and L2 (Herber and Herber, 1993, p. 69) or to

ignore taking into account the experience and knowledge readers bring to content material from a cognitive, linguistic, and emotional perspective (Vacca et al., 1991, pp. 391–392). Consequently and trying to solve this drawback, Alptekin (2006) suggests that instead of presenting to the readers two texts that are linguistically and syntactically equivalents, would be better to give the readers the same text but used in two different ways, the first version have to be the original and the second version of the text will be the culturally nativized reading, due to the fact that researchers take for granted the cultural assumptions of a native speaker of that language.

Another problem with schema theory is related to the use of recall procedures to measure in an indirect way the interaction text-reader because it allows readers to answer openly to the text (Wolf 1993), while preventing tester interference (Bernhardt, 1991). Nonetheless recall tasks may generate some inconveniences for students who have a low level of proficiency due to problems of comprehension-production interference, the demandsthat correction time implies or the scorer reliability.

Many studies show that schemata affect reading comprehension. For instance Pritchard (1990) studied the role of cultural schemata on the reading comprehension processes of proficient 9th grade readers who could have an American or a Palauan background. All the subjects were asked to read letters about funeral ceremonies in the two countries and then to give an oral report. The students were asked to produce verbal recounts of the reading strategies they use when reading and finally to retell the passages they had read. Pritchard concluded that the processing strategies and the level of comprehension are positively influenced by the cultural schemata. In the same way, Hassan (2009) adds that the importance of the role of reading comprehension is given by the content and the target culture and not for the knowledge of the language. He suggests that students need not only the relevant schemata but also the appropriate schemata for comprehension to take place.

Dolan (1994) in a study of Chinese and British children gave them two stories to read and proved that the amount of recall was quite higher in those students that read the story from their own cultural background in comparison with those that read the story with the unfamiliar cultural background. This study was done on L1 and L2 children.

Sasaki (1991) conducted a study with students with Native American and native Japanese backgrounds. All the subjects attend a university in the United States. The results strongly support the theory; and suggests that the closer the cultural familiarity, higher the scores obtained. In this case the study was done only with adults.

Malik (1995) in a study conducted with children studied the oral- reading behavior of proficient L2 readers. He uses two texts, the first one was culturally familiar to them and the second one was culturally unfamiliar. He found that the cultural schemata affected significantly the reading comprehension process.

Steffensen and Joag-Dev (1984) also conducted a study with American and Indian subjects and the results show a strongly support to the correlation between comprehension and cultural familiarity. The objective was to determine if the subjects were able to comprehend more accurately, descriptive reading about their own cultures.

Brantmeier (2003) using the words of Johnson (1981) conducted a study with university students. The subjects were proficient American and Iranian students. Both groups were asked to read passages about folklore from Iran and America respectively. The results showed that the cultural familiarity or the cultural origin of the pieces that the students had to read had an important role on reading comprehension, even more than syntactic or semantic difficulties.

Contradictory, Park (2004) examined a L2 reading and listening and found that there were some differences but only in listening while in reading it was no significant, due to the fact that the difference was higher in listening but only moderate in reading.

Poissant (1990) demonstrated with a study that there were no differences between the control and the experimental group regarding to the delayed recognition judgments in culturally familiar and unfamiliar texts.

Likewise, Phillips (1990) has revealed that in efficient readers the effects of background knowledge were notorious; nonetheless it was not observed in novice readers, because of language problems that affect their inferential understanding. In other words students are not able to do a compensatory process due to the aforementioned lack of L2.

2.3 Cultural Familiarity

To a better understanding of what cultural familiarity is, it is necessary to start defining the concept of culture. The process of defining culture has been a challenge; nonetheless the tendency has emerged around some typical definitions. Firstly it can be said that culture is a collective phenomenon shared among a culture or the members of a group of people that have differences from another (Lehmann et al., 2004).

Another definition of culture was given by Alptekin (2006) who declares that culture depends on the reference that some people of the same community have in relation with an artifact; in addition to this he states that it involves socially acquired knowledge. Consequently, it can be said that culture is learnt and not transmitted genetically. Culture is passed on through one generation to the next and it implies the socialization of ideas, knowledge, beliefs, laws, customs, and values. This cultural knowledge is distributed into specific behaviors that can frame the perception of how people understand the world. Following the same pattern, it can be found the term cultural familiarity is referred to the familiarity that a person has with a variety of different aspects of his or her culture. Studies in this field show examples of this. A study conducted by

Pulido (2004) identifies the role and effect of culture and background knowledge using familiar and unfamiliar narrative texts.

Brantmeier (2003) used short stories for demonstrating the importance of the familiarity with the topics. Lazar (1993) provides several examples of cultural aspects in texts, for instance she elaborated a list in which she included objects and products that belongs to a specific society, such as the Native Canadian Talking Stick, or the role of men and women in the Middle East in comparison with the same social structure in occidental countries. Understandably typical national celebrations fall into this category too, as well as proverbs, idiomatic patterns and chunks of language because they reveal cultural aspects of a community. Literature and poetry also can be considered as a cultural feature due to the possibility of political or historical settings as a background. The type of humor, taboos or superstitions also can be considered a cultural aspect.

2.4 Literary Elements in Reading

To understand why literary or narrative elements are closely associated with proficiency in L2 reading, it is necessary to define and analyze what literary elements are.

According to Hişmanoğlu, (2005) the contribution of literary elements in reading is a mental process which includes three main levels: literal understanding, inferential level and the imaginative reflection. When students begin the reading process, the first step is the literal understanding, where they include the analysis of literary elements in reading. These literary or narrative elements can be the setting, plot or characters which can be considered as one of the starting points to understand what is read. After that students are able to follow the second step, the inferential level in which they speculate about the literary elements and their meanings. Then, learners can produce a collaborative work that enhance the knowledge of culture and theme.

Finally, pupils at third step, reflect imaginatively about their work and have the ability of discussing questions written or orally.

Regarding to the advantages, Hişmanoğlu (2005) shows literature as a tool for developing skills, no matter if they are written or oral. The contribution of the developed skills due to the appropriate use of literature with other abilities, can improve enormously to the idea of comprehend not only a text, but also the different realities and cultures that the literature reveal. Following the same idea, an important aspect and that many authors agree is that literature is seen as a window to the target language that creates cultural competences. Lazar (1993) expresses it as an invaluable resource of motivating material to access to cultural background. The relevance of this aspect concerns the fundamental bridge to connect the different realities and knowledge through the literature.

In the field of psycholinguistic is fundamental, due to enhance the form, discourse processing, reading skills and vocabulary expansion. Moreover, as well as the previous ideas, it concerns the cultural material which helps the communicative approach in the language teaching (Hall, 2005).

Collie and Slater (1990) explain literary elements as extralinguistic knowledge, in other words they focus on the meaning of a literary text, making the connection with the importance of the material to have a certain motivation, in order to be coherent with real-life experiences, emotions and dreams of the learners.

The advantages related to the cognitive process as the creativity, critical thinking and to be analytical learners are mentioned by Obediat (1997), to understand the different and relevant edges of literature and its role on learners. Considering also that literature allows students to

question, interpret, connect, explore (Custodio and Sutton, 1998) and internalize the language at a high level (Elliot, 1990)all of them as skills developed by an appropriate use of literature.

2.5 Vocabulary

It has been proven that exists a very close relationship between vocabulary and reading, Perfetti (1985, 2007) declares that a skilled reading is supported in high-quality lexical knowledge and consequently it is a powerful predictor of reading comprehension.

An early definition of vocabulary, was given by Cronbach (1942) who stated that vocabulary was the ability to define words, to know the multiple meanings of them and to be able to recognize the suitable situations for using them.

Another definition was proposed by Laufer (1992) who noted that vocabulary included some other important aspects such as defining vocabulary knowledge, pronunciation, morphosyntactic features, collocations and semantic and pragmatic properties. And following Laufer's definition, Nation (2001) declared that vocabulary comprises three main dimensions, form, which is related to oral and written representations, meaning and use. This definition has much similarities with the high-lexical knowledge suggested by Perfetti.

When the focus is put in other aspects which are considered important to comprehend a text, it is necessary to take into account "vocabulary".

Fairbanks (1986) concluded that vocabulary instruction was an important component for the development of comprehension after conducting an analysis of several studies related to the learning of word meanings. Meanwhile, Biemiller (2003) stated that "children need this body of familiar words so that they can read new and even advanced text".

Stahl, Chou Hare, Sinatra, and Gregory (1991) examined topic knowledge in relation to vocabulary knowledge among 10th graders. They determined that, regarding to comprehension, topic and vocabulary knowledge had two different outcomes; what is comprehended and how much is comprehended.

Vocabulary can be measured taking into consideration two types of vocabulary knowledge, breadth of vocabulary that consider how many words are known and deep of vocabulary that do capture a sense of deeply are those words known because it is intended to measure the understanding of the word meaning.

It seems to be a difference between breadth and depth because they are described differently, nonetheless they are closely related to each other not only conceptually but also empirically. Qian (1999, 2002), Vermeer (2001) and Nurweni and Read (1999) have found correlations between breadth and depth of vocabulary in L2 university students. Leading them to argue that there is no substantial differences between breadth and depth of vocabulary. Indeed they suggested that they are two consistent dimensions of vocabulary knowledge in other words they are the two sides of the same entity. Meara (1990) declares that breadth and depth of vocabulary are just experience, because when language acquisition begins, a person is able to recognize and define a small amount of words in terms of basic meanings and consequently when the number of words increase, breadth of vocabulary is built. Under this point of view depth contributes to breadth and vice versa and it can be said that they are acquired through language exposure because people not only know more words but also they know them better.

After researching several studies related to vocabulary, Alderson (1984) concluded that there is a sort of threshold or language competence ceiling that has to be reached before having abilities in the L1 to begin transferring.

2.6. Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis and the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis.

Second language reading process involves the interaction of at least two language systems. Learners usually use their first language as a reading strategy because they have access to it whenever they want.

Grabe (2009) notes that between first and second language exist three main differences; linguistic and processing differences, cognitive and educational differences, and sociocultural and institutional differences.

Regarding the relationship between L1 literacy and L2 reading development there are two main stances: the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis (LIH) and the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (LTH).

According to this hypothesis, first language literacy provides that there are similarities between first and second language skills and that they work independently.

When students are literate in their first language they are able to take into consideration different aspects of reading and these provide a base for literacy development in the second language. It means that those language operations such as reading and writing should be transferable to any other language; hence, literacy development may be improved only by the reinforcement of the skills already achieved in the first language.

After conducting several studies, Verhoeven (1991, 1994, 2000, and 2003) examined the process of biliteracy concluding that those literacy skills that were developed in the first language strongly correspond to the skills acquired later in time regarding a second language.

Nonetheless the analysis of student's performances on reading comprehension and linguistic knowledge have demonstrated that the level of L2 knowledge is also important in the L2 reading

ability. Consequently, the main weakness of the LIH relies in its negligence of the importance of L2 proficiency (Jiang, 2011).

According to the hypothesis, “L2 language proficiency, as opposed to L1 reading abilities, is not critical to the development of L2 reading,” and L2 students “can have weak L2 language proficiency, but use all of their L1 academic reading skills to carry out L2 academic reading tasks successfully” (Grabe, 2009, p. 141).

One of the main assumptions regarding the Linguistic Threshold Hypothesis (Cummins, 1979) or linguistic Ceiling (Clarke, 1979, 1980) is related to the student's necessity of reaching a certain level of language proficiency in the second language in order to be able to transfer their first language skills for improving L2 reading comprehension. In other words, it means that the students ought to master a L2 level before being considered as a proficient reader in L2.

Bossers (1991), Brisbois (1995), Carrell (1991), Lee and Schallert (1997) have investigated the relationship between L1 and L2 regarding the level of proficiency of the students, and the overall performances showed that it generated fairly consistent results. Henceforward, second language proficiency seems to be a better predictor than first language reading ability when talking about second language reading ability, even more for those students who have not achieved an advanced level in the development of their second language.

Chapter III Methodological Framework

3.1 Research paradigm and type of study

This research concerns to explore the elements that students perceive as difficulties in reading comprehension while reading fiction. To do this, it is considered personal information given by students, according to their reading habits, difficulties and responses related to a text.

In this sense the research contains a data collection which consists on a survey, a reading comprehension questionnaire and an interview. This investigation gathers qualitative information, consequently, the research techniques are thought to capture the subjective experiences of students at UCSC.

3.2 Participants

The participants were thirty Chilean university students (male: 7, female: 23) who study English Pedagogy in a Chilean University They were all native speakers of Spanish. It is assumed that all the participants accomplish the requirements imposed by the university in terms of language acquisition due to the fact that they have intermediate level of English, additionally they have to seat for IELTS at the end of the course, so it corresponds at least to the B2 English level according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

This requirement was compulsory for the students to participate in this data collection, because students need a certain level of proficiency in the second language, in order to be able to transfer the first language skills for improving L2 reading comprehension (Cummins,1979).

3.3 Description of the Materials:

The materials consist in: a survey, a questionnaire and an interview.

The words selected by the participants as the most difficult for them to understand were analyzed with a program called “Lextutor”. This program provides frequency-based wordlists of the words that are very common in English, but that people are unlikely to discover in a random or natural manner. This program starts from the basis that, in a second language, in most cases there is not enough time to discover and learn all it is common words without trying as in their first language. The reason for this is that many common words and phrases are nonetheless not all that common, occurring only a few times per million words of natural text (Cobb 1997).

3.4 Instruments

In order to gather information about the reading habits of the participants, the instruments already mentioned have been created to observe if the background knowledge influences the level of comprehension and response that students reach when they read a text.

The first instrument used was an individual survey which accomplished the task of gathering information about the time the students generally spent reading, the type of reading they preferred, and the problems they would find while reading a text, giving an estimation of literary competences. Citing Vidich and Shapiro (1955:31) and declaring that the use of surveys can precisely document the norm, identify extreme goals, and frame remembrances between variables in a sample, highlighting this way the superior deductibility of the survey over other kind of field methods. It means that surveys are useful deciphering characteristics of a large population, because it provides a broad capability that describe an accurate sample.

Vidich and Shapiro (1955:31) cited by Gable (1994) observe that "without the survey data, the observer could only make reasonable guesses about his area of ignorance in the effort to reduce bias." In words of Jick [1983:138] surveys contribute to improve confidence in the general results.

The second instrument were two texts that had as a main objective that students identify, highlight and underline the elements they considered as difficulty. The elements previously mentioned, were divided into literary, cultural and language elements. The texts are followed by a questionnaire which measures reading comprehension and it consists of four open questions related to the difficulties they found while reading the text in the aspects mentioned before. In this case the questionnaire used is an open-ended one, this is based on the Dawson's (2007) definition which mentions that "Open-ended questionnaires might be used to find out what people think about a particular topic". An aspect of this kind of questionnaire is that, as there are no standard answers to this questionnaires, the data analysis is more complex, however due to the purposes of the research, this kind of answers are an important part of the research objectives.

Finally, the interview is used to collect the students' perceptions of reading and the difficulties they had.

According to Dawson (2007) in a semi-structured interview "the researcher wants to know specific information which can be compared and contrasted with gained in other interviews" taking into account the previous results that the survey gave us to understand and compare what they feel while reading the text. For this reason, he declares that "the researcher also wants the interview to remain flexible so that other important information can still arise" mainly due to the possibility of students to share their experience.

3.5. Procedure

The instruments were delivered in two different ways. First, for those students who were taking their second and third year, Ev@ the university platform was chosen due to the possibility that researchers and students have, in terms of access.

The subjects had two weeks to answer and they had to deliver the instruments back in the same way they received them.

There was no distinction between the texts and they were given randomly.

CHAPTER IV

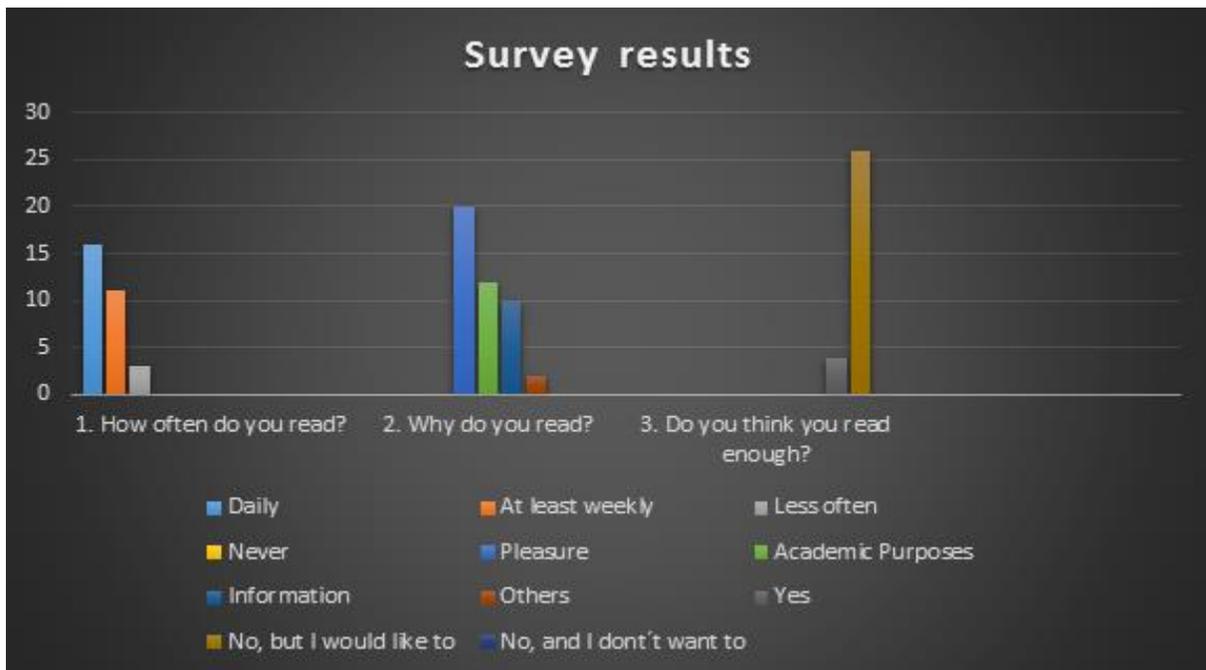
Description of the Results

The analysis of the results is divided into three parts: (a) the survey results, which show the reading habits of the participants, (b) the reading comprehension results where different kind of classifications were made, first the functions of the words, then the frequency in corpus, and differences between literal and figurative meaning, and (c) the analysis of the answers of the interview.

4.1. Survey Results

Chart 1

Reading habits



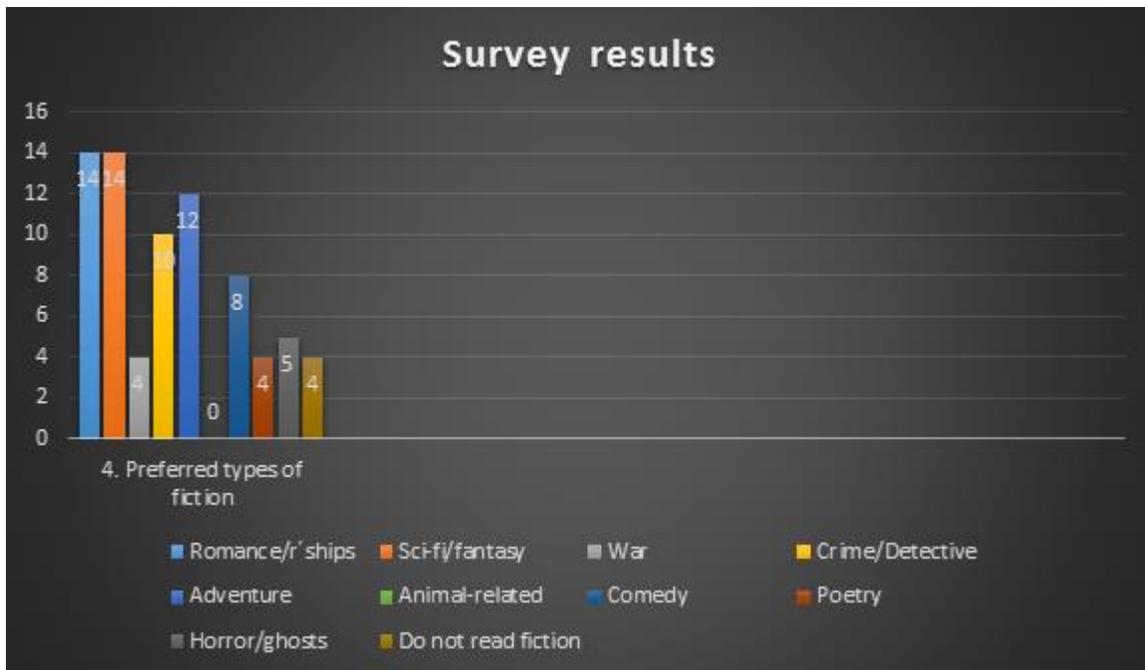
Question 1: The bar graph shows that most of the participants read daily while the minority expressed that they read less often. Finally, none of the participants said that they never read.

Question 2: The bar graph shows that most of the participants answered that pleasure was their main reason to read, while the minority said that was something that was not in the alternatives.

Question 3: The bar graph shows that most of the participants considered that they don't read enough, buet they would like to while the minority of the participants answered that they thought that they read enough.

Chart 2

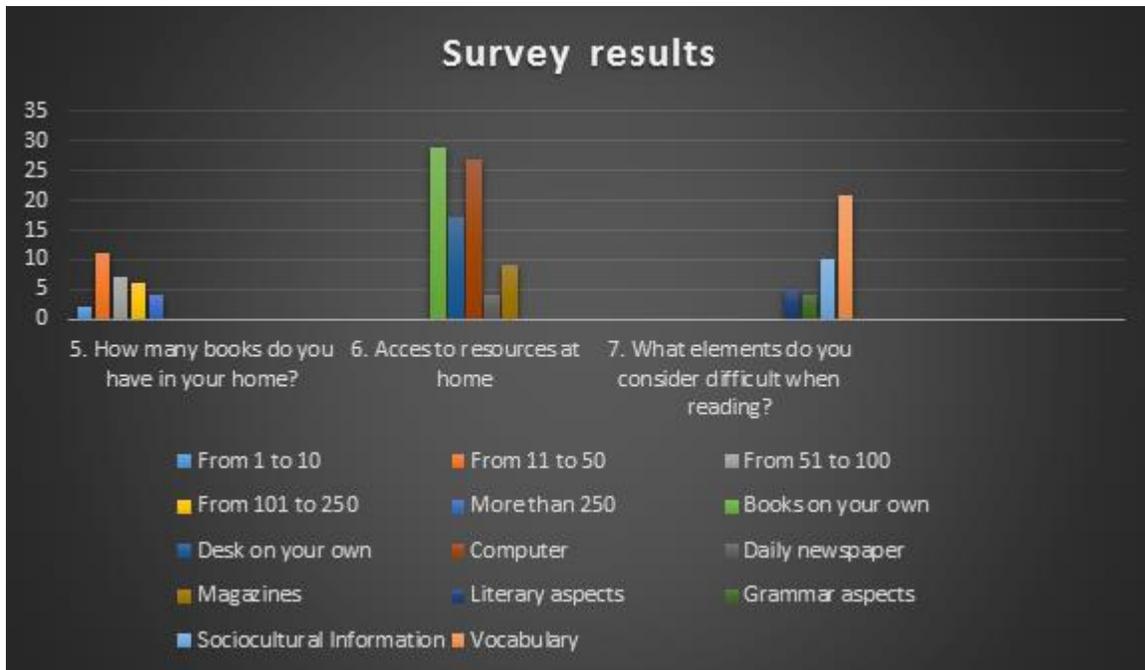
Preferred types of fiction.



Question 4: The bar graph shows that Romance/relationship and sci-fi/fantasy were the favorite type of fiction for the majority of the participants. The less preferred types of fiction by the participants were war, poetry, while, with the same amount, the participants answered that they do not read fiction. From all the alternatives, none of the participants selected Animal-related type of fiction as one of their preference.

Chart 3

Resources and difficult

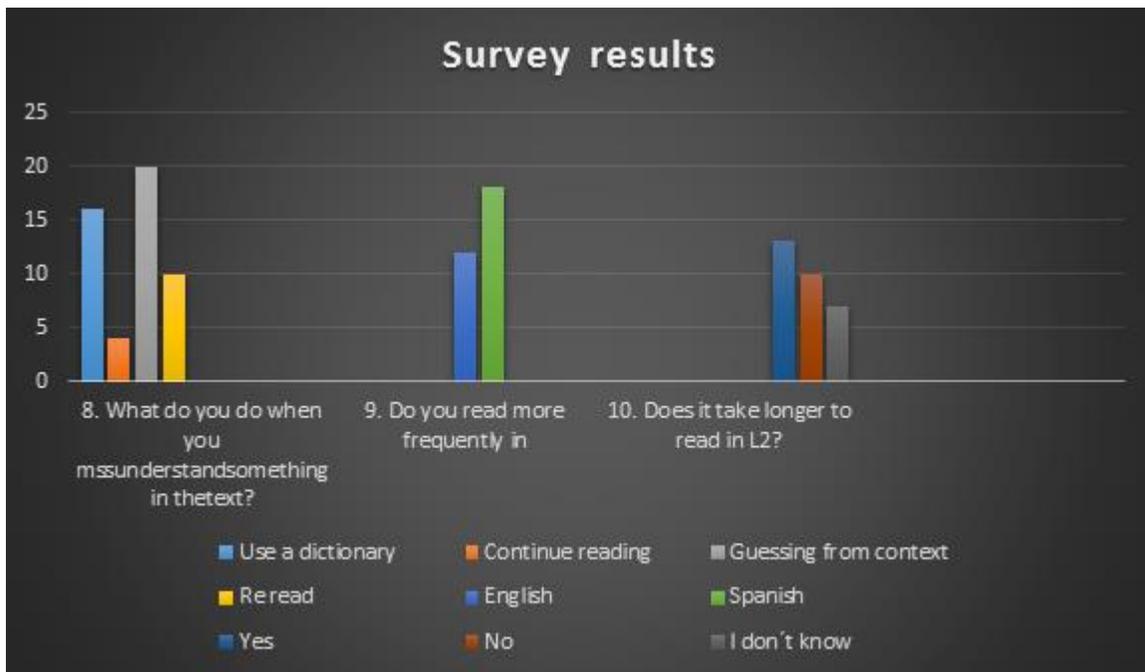


Question 5: The bar graph shows that most of the participants have from 11 to 50 books at home. The minority answered that they have from 1 to 10 books at home.

Question 6: The bar graph shows that most of the students have books and that the minority have access to newspapers.

Question 7: The bar graph shows that most of the students consider that vocabulary is the most difficult element when they are reading. The less preferred option is related to grammar aspects.

Chart 4



Question 8: The bar graph shows that most of the participants declared that they guess from the context when don't understand the text. The minority expressed that continued reading when this situation occurred.

Question 9: The bar graph shows that the majority of the participants read more frequently in Spanish, which is their native language while the minority does it in English.

Question 10: The bar graph shows that for the majority of the participants it takes longer to read in L2, while in second place some of the participants expressed that reading in L2 does not take them longer. Finally, the minority expressed that they did not know if reading in L2 would take longer for them or not.

4.2 Function of Words:

Chart 5

The veldt

Verbs	Pronouns	Nouns	Adjectives	Chunks
Recede (3)		Humming (4)	Thatched (6)	Throw a tantrum (4)
Prickling (4)		Glade (6)	Squinted (4)	Rod and reel (3)
Pranced (5)		Veldt (10)	Bemused (7)	Agatemarbles (4)
swabbed (3)		Pebble (8)	Lurking (2)	
Wailed (2)		Odorophonics (12)	Withrelish (2)	
Whirled (2)		Veldtland (6)	Weeping (3)	
Perspire (4)		Vulture (11)	Engrossed (3)	
Clawing (2)		Twinge (7)		
Chewed (2)		Jaunt (9)		
Clustered (3)		Upholstery (7)		

		Pelt (6)		
		Tapestry (6)		
		Noontide (8)		
		Contraption (4)		
		Rut (3)		
		Flock (2)		
		Flue (6)		
		Hunches (4)		
		Tampering (5)		
		Spoor (4)		
		Offspring (4)		
		Sod (5)		
		Hatred (5)		

Chart 6

SQ

Verbs	Pronouns	Nouns	Adjective	
Misuse (3)		Rubberball (4)	Infectious	Hopingagainst hope
Trust		Casting aspersions (2)		
Regain		Bureau (2)		
Reassure		Wisdom (2)		
Seceded		Shelter (2)		
		Riot		
		Strain (2)		
		Tremor		
		Aspersion (2)		
		Inmate (2)		

4.3 Frequency in corpus

All the words highlighted by the subjects were classified according to the Lexical Frequency Profile proposed by Laufer and Nation (1995) in which student writing was analyzed for the frequency of word families, with vocabulary profiles produced from the scripts on the basis of three word-list blocks. The words selected by the participants as the most difficult for them to understand were analyzed with a program called “Lextutor”. This program provides frequency-based wordlists of the words that are very common in English, but that people are unlikely to discover in a random or natural manner.

According to the classification the VocabProfile tells you how many words the text contains from the following four frequency levels: (1) the list of the most frequent 1000 word families, (2) the second 1000, (3) the Academic Word List, and (4) words that do not appear on the other lists. (Lextutor.ca)

4.3.1 Description

The charts below show how the words highlighted by the subjects, in their vast majority, correspond to the last level of frequency or less common words in the English corpus. As the words are divided into three main groups or classifications, all the words that are out of the first three are considered off list words.

Chart 7

Word Classification. The Veldt words.

	Families	Types	Tokens	Percent													
K1 Words (1-1000):	4	4	4	8.16%	<table border="1"> <tr> <th colspan="2">Current profile</th> </tr> <tr> <th>%</th> <th>Cumul.</th> </tr> <tr> <td>8.16</td> <td>8.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4.08</td> <td>12.24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0.00</td> <td>12.24</td> </tr> <tr> <td>87.76</td> <td>100.00</td> </tr> </table>	Current profile		%	Cumul.	8.16	8.16	4.08	12.24	0.00	12.24	87.76	100.00
Current profile																	
%	Cumul.																
8.16	8.16																
4.08	12.24																
0.00	12.24																
87.76	100.00																
Function:	(3)	(6.12%)													
Content:	(1)	(2.04%)													
> Anglo-Sax																	
=Not Greco-Lat/Fr Cog:	(1)	(2.04%)													
K2 Words (1001-2000):	2	2	2	4.08%													
>																	
Anglo-Sax:	(1)	(2.04%)													
1k+2k			...	(12.24%)													
AWL Words (academic):				0.00%													
>																	
Anglo-Sax:	()	(0.00%)													
Off-List Words:	?	43	43	87.76%													
6+?	49	49	49	100%													

Words in text (tokens):	49
Different words (types):	49
Type-token ratio:	1.00
Tokens per type:	1.00
Lex density (content words/total)	0.94
<hr/>	
<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
Tokens:	6
Types:	6
Families:	6
Tokens per family:	1.00
Types per family:	1.00
Anglo-Sax Index: <small>(A-Sax tokens + functors / onlist tokens)</small>	%
Greco-Lat/Fr-Cognate Index: <small>(Inverse of above)</small>	%

Word Classification	Words
K1 Words (1-1000)	Throw
K2 Words (1001 – 2000)	Rod, Hatred
K3 Words AWL Words	
Off List Words	Recede, Prickling, Pranced, Swabber, Wailed, Tantrum Whirled, Clawing, Chewed, Clutered, Humming, Thatched, Glade, Squinted, Reel, Veldt, Bemused, Pebble, Lurking, Odorophonics, Relish, Weeping, Vulture, Engrossed, Twinge, Jaunt, Upholstery, Pelt, Tapestry, Noontide, Contraption, Rut, Flock, Flue, Hunches, Tampering, Spoor, Sod

Chart 8

Word Classification: SQ words.

	Families	Types	Tokens	Percent													
K1 Words (1-1000):	3	3	4	22.22%	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">Current profile</th> </tr> <tr> <th>%</th> <th>Cumul.</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>22.22</td> <td>22.22</td> </tr> <tr> <td>16.67</td> <td>38.89</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0.00</td> <td>38.89</td> </tr> <tr> <td>61.11</td> <td>100.00</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Current profile		%	Cumul.	22.22	22.22	16.67	38.89	0.00	38.89	61.11	100.00
Current profile																	
%	Cumul.																
22.22	22.22																
16.67	38.89																
0.00	38.89																
61.11	100.00																
Function:	(0)	(0.00%)													
Content:	(4)	(22.22%)													
> Anglo-Sax																	
=Not Greco-Lat/Fr Cog:	(1)	(5.56%)													
K2 Words (1001-2000):	2	2	3	16.67%													
>																	
Anglo-Sax:	(3)	(16.67%)													
1k+2k			...	(38.89%)													
AWL Words (academic):				0.00%													
>																	
Anglo-Sax:	(0)	(0.00%)													
Off-List Words:	<u>2</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>61.11%</u>													
	5+?	16	18	100%													

Words in text (tokens):	18
Different words (types):	16
Type-token ratio:	0.89
Tokens per type:	1.12
Lex density (content words/total)	1.00
<hr/>	
<i>Pertaining to onlist only</i>	
Tokens:	7
Types:	5
Families:	5
Tokens per family:	1.40
Types per family:	1.00
Anglo-Sax Index: <small>(A-Sax tokens + functors / onlist tokens)</small>	%
Greco-Lat/Fr-Cognate Index: <small>(Inverse of above)</small>	%

Word Classification	Words
K1 Words (1-1000)	Trust, Ball, Hoping
K2 Words (1001 – 2000)	Shelter, Rubber
K3 Words AWL Words	
Off-List Words	Misuse, Regain, Reassure, Seceded, Bureau, Wisdom, Riot, Strain, Tremor, Aspersion, Inmate, Infectious, against hope

4.4 Literal and figurative meaning

Literal meaning of a word corresponds to what is intended to be, or actually is, and according to Bergen (2005) it involves only the interpretation of each word in the sentence in terms of its straightforward meaning. On the contrary, figurative meaning has as a requisite the knowledge of an idiom or phrasal verb, which are strings of words that taken together have a different meaning than the individual component words (Schmitt, 2000). Interpretations of those figurative elements differ from literal ones because the meaning is not a composition from the words which are include in the utterance. Furthermore, as Giora (1999) declares, readers process first the literal meaning of a word or sentence, hence, nonliteral meaning is an optional process because it is activated only if they find a mismatch of literal meaning with context, adding that it occurs only after having access to literal meaning and rejecting it.

On the other hand there are some authors that support the theory of language equivalence, it means that literal meaning has no priority over non literal or figurative language. According to Gibbs (1984: 287) Processing nonliteral language does not necessitate processing the surface literal meaning first. Rather, nonliteral meaning is processed directly, without the interference of the surface literal meaning. Keysar (1989) suggests that both interpretations are functionally equivalent, literal meaning is computed automatically, in the same way that metaphorical meaning, comprehension is a compulsory manner and its interpretations do not ask for triggering condition. Consequently, the understanding of a metaphor should be as easy as understanding literal language.

Nonetheless, it can be said that this automatic condition will only happen if the reader is a native speaker of a language, due to the fact that a native speaker is able to catch all the cultural references presented in a figurative chunk of language.

Chart 9

Literal Language, Cultural Language, Figurative Language

Literal language		Cultural Language	Figurative Language
Tapestry	Prickling	seceded	Recede The walls began to purr and recede into crystalline distance.
Clustered	Pranced	veldt	Infectious Dr. Speakie's sincerity and scientific enthusiasm were infectious .
Noontide	glade	shelter	casting aspersions I had to sit and listen in person to people insulting him personally, casting aspersions on his motives and questioning his scientific integrity and even his sincerity.
Thatched	Humming	riot	Bureau I came to work for him when he was named the Chief of the Psychometric Bureau . That was true of everybody else in the office and in the Bureau
Inmate	veldt		Odorophonics Now the hidden odorophonics were beginning to blow a wind of odor at the two people in the middle of the baked veldtland.

			It's all odorophonics and sonics, Lydia. Here's my handkerchief."
Contraption	swabbers		<p>rubber balls</p> <p>I used to think it was as if he had rubber balls in the toes of his shoes. Not that he ever got really depressed or reacted with inopportune emotion, but it was as if the rubber balls in his shoes had gone just a little bit flat.</p>
Squinted	pebble		<p>hoping against hope</p> <p>He just kept hoping against hope that the average scores would begin to go down</p>
Flue	wailed		<p>Rut</p> <p>"Or it can't respond," said Lydia, "because the children have thought about Africa and lions and killing so many days that the room's in a rut."</p>
Hatred	regain		<p>Flock</p> <p>"Wendy, come back here!" said George Hadley, but she was gone. The house lights followed her like a flock of fireflies.</p>
Bemused	trust		<p>Lurking</p> <p>There was a green, lovely forest, a lovely river, a purple mountain, high voices singing, and Rima, lovely and mysterious, lurking in the trees with colorful flights of butterflies, like animated bouquets, lingering in her</p>

			long hair.
Hunches	misuse		Spoor "Paranoia is thick around here today," said David McClean. "You can follow it like a spoor ."
withrelish	shelter		Tantrum "You know how difficult Peter is about that. When I punished him a month ago by locking the nursery for even a few hours - the tantrum he threw! And Wendy too. Theyliveforthenursery."
Tampering	riot		
Sod	reassure		
Offspring	wisdom		
Weeping	shelter		
Engrossed	riot		
agate marbles	vultures		
rod and reel	seceded		
Clawing	whirled		
Upholstery	strain		

Tremor	jaunt		
Pelt	twinge		
Chewed	perspire		

4.5 Text and Post Reading Questions

Four questions were assigned to each text (figure), all the questions are specifically related to the second specific objective. The students were asked to answer questions related to genre of the story and others specifically related to the story itself.

Chart 10

Post Reading Questions of The Veldt and SQ texts.

The veldt	SQ
1. What is the genre of the veldt story? fiction 2. Did you agree with George when he turned off the nursery? 3. Mc Clean says 'Where before they had a Santa Claus, now they have a Scrooge'. What does he mean? 4. What did the lions finally do? How did you feel when you realized?	1. What is the genre of the SQ story? 2. What is the influence of the SQ test in the attitude that Doctor Speakie has at the end of the story? 3. Who was Nixon? Why does the secretary compared him with Doctor Speakie? 4. Would you change your test results like Dr Speakie?

According to The Veldt story, the majority of students believe that the genre is science fiction.

Most students answered yes to the second question which asks about a personal situation, the students were asked to put themselves in the parent's situation, and all of them answered that they would act in the same way.

In question number three students spread their comprehension in several ways, they not only achieve the comprehension of the text but also, all of them agree that there was a negative change in the personality of the children. Where there were cute children, they have now people with almost no feelings.

In the last question all students said what happened at the end of the story, adding that they were shocked about the death of the parents.

In the first question of the SQ, all students said that the genre is science fiction.

The second question is answered in different forms according to the results that Doctor Speakie obtain in the test, adding that is affected his behavior.

The third question, which is related to cultural element, was correctly answered by all students, identifying correctly the name of Nixon and link it with the main character of the story.

In the last question, all students agree in terms of not changing the test results, arguing that it would loose the main purpose of the test.

According to the post reading questions results, it is possible to see no major response problems; the participants easily identify the genre of the story and most of them get the cultural analogy presented in the questions.

4.6 Interview Results

The students had to answer a few questions in order to know about their perceptions regarding reading comprehension in a second language, although the subjects were interviewed separately they had very similar answers.

Half of the participants looked words up in the dictionary, and just few people read the text twice; nonetheless, they declared in their vast majority that they return to read those passages they found difficult.

In general, students enjoyed reading both of the stories; participants mentioned that they would like to read another story from the same author. Additionally, it is possible to see different reasons of what was difficult for them in the text. Most of the students declared that their main problem in order to understand the text was related to vocabulary detailing that adjectives in particular were the words that interfered with the comprehension process.

Chart 1

Interview Questions

Interview Questions
How many times did you read the text?
Did you understand the text better before/after looking the dictionary?
Did you return to read difficult passages?
Would you like to read another story from the same author?
Did you talk about the story with somebody else? If your answer is yes. Why?
What did you find difficult in the text?

CHAPTER V

5.1 Discussion

The discussion of this study were done considering the specific objectives already mentioned in Chapter 1, a description of the results was done taking into account the answers that the students have given in the three instruments used.

5.1.1 Specific objective 1: Identify reading habits of the subjects

In order to investigate the reading habits of the participants a survey was conducted. After the graphs analysis that shows the reading habits of the participants, it is possible to mention that there are clear trends. Most of the participants stated to read daily and for pleasure, due to the fact of having access to literature through a myriad of ways, finding at this point several types of fiction as their favorite genre; nevertheless, they consider that they do not read enough but they would like to do it more constantly.

5.1.2 Specific objective 2: Recognize the difficulties, regarding language, cultural and literal elements.

As the present study sought to investigate what are the difficulties perceived by students two instruments were applied. Those instruments as it was previously mentioned were the text where the subjects had to underline the items they did not know and the interview that reflected the perception about the former activity.

These results determine that the factors described in the second specific objective are coherent with the problems related to language elements, specifically vocabulary. Consequently, vocabulary is perceived as the most difficult element regarding reading comprehension, adjectives and nouns were pointed out as a distractor due to slight differences in meaning that provoked confusions; nonetheless, at this proficiency level it is not a drawback to get the correct message, which is the main objective of reading (Nutall 1996). Despite vocabulary problems, all the participants at the moment of expressing what they feel at the end of the story, pointed out that they have reached a certain level of involvement; hence, they were able to express what they felt while reading the story. They commonly use expressions such as “I felt terrible”, “what an awful way to die”, “I felt quite amazed and shocked”, which may correspond to a high level of emotional concerning, indicating a level of emotional involvement.

Regarding the answers of the participants in the interview, it is possible to mention that most of the participants read the text once just by returning to the difficult passages they found in it. This is important to consider in terms of the relevance of the reading comprehension as a whole, which students achieve to comprehend the main idea of the text in spite of the vocabulary problems. Besides, the use of a dictionary to understand the unknown words and passages was needed. Even though some of the participants were able to understand the text just by getting the meaning of the unknown words from the context in which they were placed, although they did not talk about the text with somebody else.

Furthermore, students mentioned that they would like to read another book of the same author. The interest of students in reading another book of the author, can be related to reading for pleasure, that as it was mentioned before, it helps to increase “general knowledge” (e.g. Cunningham and Stanovich, 1998) which is related to the idea of an integral understanding. Moreover, can be said that the process of enjoying the text was not interfered by the difficulties expressed by students at the end of the reading.

Finally, in terms of perceptions regarding the difficulties that the participants perceive, It can be said then, that the students' perceptions are developed differently than the reality. Not only because vocabulary was the main issue that the participants dealt with; but also because they declared that they got confused or lost when they did not know the adjectives they found, nonetheless, at the moment of asking them to highlight the words they did not know, the most highlighted words were nouns.

According to the classification of words in the lextutorprogram, it was revealed that the words selected by the students, which are repeated more times in the text, belong to the fourth category of words that correspond to the less frequent words in the English Corpus. These words are out of academic language, so it can be said that the only way of acquiring them is through the increment in reading or an extensive reading programme, due to the fact that people need between 5- 16 times of exposure in order to retain and learn a new word (Nation, 2001).

5.4 Conclusions

Certain conclusions can be drawn from the discussion already presented in this document aiming the general objective, comprises the following:

1. The idea that vocabulary is the element that interfere the most in the process of reading in a second language. Nonetheless; it does not prevent the subjects from getting the whole message of the text.
2. The fact that cultural familiarity is needed to understand the texts, because of the discrepancies in the background knowledge are an important source of individual difference in reading comprehension.

3. Regarding literal and figurative meaning, there are no significant conclusions, due to the fact that in order to understand the figurative meaning of a word, students need to master the literal meaning first, which means that it is difficult to measure the impact of literary competencies.

5.2 Limitations:

- This study includes just one genre, which gave us a narrow sample of the survey results.
- The participants of this study were given voluntarily so a bigger sample could be reached if the texts were applied as part of a class program.
- The number of students is reduced. A larger number of participants could be used to conduct this study, consequently, differences could reveal a significant variation.
- Reading comprehension was not measured, only perceptions were looked for.

5.3 Further research:

1. Genre fiction texts were used to conduct this research, to use a different genre could generate different perceptions regarding comprehension among students, so significant differences could be found.
2. The time given to the students to send the instruments back were two weeks, reducing or improving the time to answer could show other kind of perceptions.

3. Reducing the time given to answer the instruments and adding a time pressure on the answers could show a significant difference on the results.

4. Further research includes students with lower level of English, it means that high school or primary students could reveal different results.

5. The pertinence of the grammar translation method which does not make connections with the real use of a word, instead of making them a context, just emphasizing in the translation and grammar rules.

5.4.1 Pedagogical implications

Based on the findings of this study some classroom implications are suggested to improve reading performance.

1. To increase the amount of reading (tasks) in order to improve reading habits.
2. Texts of different genres that include a wider range of vocabulary. The teacher could find different texts that may be helpful to increase the amount of known words, such as vocabulary books.
3. The teacher could give more options to students to choose. This would improve motivation and involvement of the readers.
4. Teachers must be prepared to let students teach each other about reading and the studying process.

After conducting the study, it can be said that the study shows the factors perceived by students that interfere in the process of reading, where vocabulary is the aspect that produces more difficult as an obstacle to achieve a better comprehension. Additionally, cultural elements are fundamental to understand the context and the purpose of the reading, and in the study is

possible to evidence when students know or do not about particular aspects where the cultural information is needed.

Finally, essential difficulty seems to be limitations in range of vocabulary and this can be argued according to the quantity of words, most of them in the category of literal meaning and supported by the lextuthor, the majority of words belong to a complex or not common used words.

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APENDIX

1 Survey The Veldt:

Instructions:

Please answer the following questionnaire according to your experience as a reader of a second language. Then, in the following assigned text, read and **highlight** the words and phrases you do not know. Remember to submit the task before two weeks on ev@.

Part 1 Reading Habits

1. How often do you read?
 - a. Daily
 - b. At least weekly
 - c. Less often
 - d. Never

2. Why do you read?
 - a. Pleasure
 - b. Academic purposes
 - c. Information
 - d. Other _____

3. Do you think you read enough?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No, but I would like to
 - c. No, and I don't want to

4. Preferred types of fiction

- a. Romance/ r'ships
- b. Sci-fi/ fantasy
- c. War
- d. Crime/detective
- e. Adventure
- f. Animal-related
- g. Comedy
- h. Poetry
- i. Horror/ghosts
- j. Do not read fiction

5. How many books do you have in your home?

- a. 1-10
- b. 11-50
- c. 51-100
- d. 101-250
- e. 250+

6. Access to resources at home. Mark all options that correspond.

- a. Books of your own
- b. Desk on your own
- c. Computer
- d. Daily newspaper
- e. Magazines

Part 2

7. What elements do you consider difficult when reading?

- a. Literary aspects
- b. Grammar features
- c. Sociocultural information
- d. Vocabulary

8. What do you do when you misunderstand something in the text?

- a. Use a dictionary
- b. Continue reading
- c. Guessing from context
- d. Re read

9. Do you read more frequently in:

- a. English
- b. Spanish

10. Does it take longer to read in L2?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

11. Why do you think that is?

12. How many times do you read a text when it is in a second language?

“The Veldt” (1950)

"George, I wish you'd look at the nursery."

"What's wrong with it?"

"I don't know."

"Well, then."

"I just want you to look at it, is all, or call a psychologist in to look at it."

"What would a psychologist want with a nursery?"

"You know very well what he'd want." His wife paused in the middle of the kitchen and watched the stove busy humming to itself, making supper for four.

"It's just that the nursery is different now than it was."

"All right, let's have a look."

They walked down the hall of their soundproofed HappyLife Home, which had cost them thirty thousand dollars installed, this house which clothed and fed and rocked them to sleep and played and sang and was good to them.

Their approach sensitized a switch somewhere and the nursery light flicked on when they came within ten feet of it. Similarly, behind them, in the halls, lights went on and off as they left them behind, with a soft automaticity.

"Well," said George Hadley.

They stood on the thatched floor of the nursery. It was forty feet across by forty feet long and thirty feet high; it had cost half again as much as the rest of the house. "But nothing's too good for our children," George had said.

The nursery was silent. It was empty as a jungle glade at hot high noon. The walls were blank and two dimensional. Now, as George and Lydia, Hadley stood in the center of the room, the walls began to purr and recede into crystalline distance, it seemed, and presently an African veldt appeared, in three dimensions, on all sides, in color reproduced to the final pebble and bit of straw. The ceiling above them became a deep sky with a hot yellow sun.

George Hadley felt the perspiration start on his brow.

"Let's get out of this sun," he said. "This is a little too real. But I don't see anything wrong."

"Wait a moment, you'll see," said his wife.

Now the hidden odorophonics were beginning to blow a wind of odor at the two people in the middle of the baked veldtland. The hot straw smell of lion grass, the cool green smell of the hidden water hole, the great rusty smell of animals, the smell of dust like a red paprika in the hot air. And now the sounds: the thump of distant antelope feet on grassy sod, the papery rustling of vultures. A shadow passed through the sky. The shadow flickered on George Hadley's upturned, sweating face.

"Filthy creatures," he heard his wife say.

"The vultures."

"You see, there are the lions, far over, that way. Now they're on their way to the water hole.

They've just been eating," said Lydia. "I don't know what."

"Some animal." George Hadley put his hand up to shield off the burning light from his squinted eyes. "A zebra or a baby giraffe, maybe."

"Are you sure?" His wife sounded peculiarly tense.

"No, it's a little late to be sure," he said, amused. "Nothing over there I can see but cleaned bone, and the vultures dropping for what's left."

"Did you hear that scream?" she asked.

"No."

"About a minute ago?"

"Sorry, no."

The lions were coming. And again George Hadley was filled with admiration for the mechanical genius who had conceived this room. A miracle of efficiency selling for an absurdly low price. Every home should have one.

Oh, occasionally they frightened you with their clinical accuracy, they startled you, gave you a twinge, but most of the time what fun for everyone, not only your own son and daughter, but for yourself when you felt like a quick jaunt to a foreign land, a quick change of scenery. Well, here it was!

And here were the lions now, fifteen feet away, so real, so feverishly and startlingly real that you could feel the prickling fur on your hand, and your mouth was stuffed with the dusty upholstery smell of their heated pelts, and the yellow of them was in your eyes like the yellow of an exquisite French tapestry, the yellows of lions and summer grass, and the sound of the matted lion lungs exhaling on the silent noontide, and the smell of meat from the panting, dripping mouths.

The lions stood looking at George and Lydia Hadley with terrible green-yellow eyes.

"Watch out!" screamed Lydia.

The lions came running at them.

Lydia bolted and ran. Instinctively, George sprang after her. Outside, in the hall, with the door slammed he was laughing and she was crying, and they both stood appalled at the other's reaction.

"George!"

"Lydia! Oh, my dear poor sweet Lydia!"

"They almost got us!"

"Walls, Lydia, remember; crystal walls, that's all they are. Oh, they look real, I must admit - Africa in your parlor - but it's all dimensional, superreactionary, supersensitive color film and mental tape film behind glass screens. It's all odorophonics and sonics, Lydia. Here's my handkerchief."

"I'm afraid." She came to him and put her body against him and cried steadily. "Did you see? Did you feel? It's too real."

"Now, Lydia..."

"You've got to tell Wendy and Peter not to read any more on Africa."

"Of course - of course." He patted her.

"Promise?"

"Sure."

"And lock the nursery for a few days until I get my nerves settled."

"You know how difficult Peter is about that. When I punished him a month ago by locking the nursery for even a few hours - the tantrum he threw! And Wendy too. They live for the nursery."

"It's got to be locked, that's all there is to it."

"All right." Reluctantly he locked the huge door. "You've been working too hard. You need a rest."

"I don't know - I don't know," she said, blowing her nose, sitting down in a chair that immediately began to rock and comfort her. "Maybe I don't have enough to do. Maybe I have time to think too much. Why don't we shut the whole house off for a few days and take a vacation?"

"You mean you want to fry my eggs for me?"

"Yes." She nodded.

"And dam my socks?"

"Yes." A frantic, watery-eyed nodding.

"And sweep the house?"

"Yes, yes - oh, yes!"

"But I thought that's why we bought this house, so we wouldn't have to do anything?"

"That's just it. I feel like I don't belong here. The house is wife and mother now, and nursemaid. Can I compete with an African veldt? Can I give a bath and scrub the children as efficiently or quickly as the automatic scrub bath can? I cannot. And it isn't just me. It's you. You've been awfully nervous lately."

"I suppose I have been smoking too much."

"You look as if you didn't know what to do with yourself in this house, either. You smoke a little more every morning and drink a little more every afternoon and need a little more sedative every night. You're beginning to feel unnecessary too."

"Am I?" He paused and tried to feel into himself to see what was really there.

"Oh, George!" She looked beyond him, at the nursery door. "Those lions can't get out of there, can they?"

He looked at the door and saw it tremble as if something had jumped against it from the other side.

"Of course not," he said.

At dinner they ate alone, for Wendy and Peter were at a special plastic carnival across town and had televised home to say they'd be late, to go ahead eating. So George Hadley, bemused, sat watching the dining-room table produce warm dishes of food from its mechanical interior.

"We forgot the ketchup," he said.

"Sorry," said a small voice within the table, and ketchup appeared.

As for the nursery, thought George Hadley, it won't hurt for the children to be locked out of it awhile. Too much of anything isn't good for anyone. And it was clearly indicated that the children had been spending a little too much time on Africa. That sun. He could feel it on his neck, still, like a hot paw. And the lions. And the smell of blood. Remarkable how the nursery caught the telepathic emanations of the children's minds and created life to fill their every desire. The children thought lions, and there were lions. The children thought zebras, and there were zebras. Sun—sun. Giraffes—giraffes. Death and death.

That last. He chewed tastelessly on the meat that the table had cut for him. Death thoughts. They were awfully young, Wendy and Peter, for death thoughts. Or, no, you were never too young, really. Long before you knew what death was you were wishing it on someone else. When you were two years old you were shooting people with cap pistols.

But this - the long, hot African veldt-the awful death in the jaws of a lion. And repeated again and again.

"Where are you going?"

He didn't answer Lydia. Preoccupied, he let the lights glow softly on ahead of him, extinguish behind him as he padded to the nursery door. He listened against it. Far away, a lion roared.

He unlocked the door and opened it. Just before he stepped inside, he heard a faraway scream. And then another roar from the lions, which subsided quickly.

He stepped into Africa. How many times in the last year had he opened this door and found Wonderland, Alice, the Mock Turtle, or Aladdin and his Magical Lamp, or Jack Pumpkinhead of Oz, or Dr. Doolittle, or the cow jumping over a very real-appearing moon-all the delightful contraptions of a make-believe world. How often had he seen Pegasus flying in the sky ceiling, or seen fountains of red fireworks, or heard angel voices singing. But now, in yellow hot Africa, this bake oven with murder in the heat. Perhaps Lydia was right. Perhaps they needed a little vacation from the fantasy which was growing a bit too real for ten-year-old children. It was all right to exercise one's mind with gymnastic fantasies, but when the lively child mind settled on one pattern...? It seemed that, at a distance, for the past month, he had heard lions roaring, and smelled their strong odor seeping as far away as his study door. But, being busy, he had paid it no attention.

George Hadley stood on the African grassland alone. The lions looked up from their feeding, watching him. The only flaw to the illusion was the open door through which he could see his wife, far down the dark hall, like a framed picture, eating her dinner abstractedly.

"Go away," he said to the lions.

They did not go.

He knew the principle of the room exactly. You sent out your thoughts.

Whatever you thought would appear. "Let's have Aladdin and his lamp," he snapped. The veldtland remained; the lions remained.

"Come on, room! I demand Aladdin!" he said.

Nothing happened. The lions mumbled in their baked pelts.

"Aladdin!"

He went back to dinner. "The fool room's out of order," he said. "It won't respond."

"Or--"

"Or what?"

"Or it can't respond," said Lydia, "because the children have thought about Africa and lions and killing so many days that the room's in a rut."

"Could be."

"Or Peter's set it to remain that way."

"Set it?"

"He may have got into the machinery and fixed something."

"Peter doesn't know machinery."

"He's a wise one for ten. That I.Q. of his -"

"Nevertheless -"

"Hello, Mom. Hello, Dad."

The Hadleys turned. Wendy and Peter were coming in the front door, cheeks like peppermint candy, eyes like bright blue agate marbles, a smell of ozone on their jumpers from their trip in the helicopter.

"You're just in time for supper," said both parents.

"We're full of strawberry ice cream and hot dogs," said the children, holding hands. "But we'll sit and watch."

"Yes, come tell us about the nursery," said George Hadley.

The brother and sister blinked at him and then at each other.

"Nursery?"

"All about Africa and everything," said the father with false joviality.

"I don't understand," said Peter.

"Your mother and I were just traveling through Africa with rod and reel; Tom Swift and his Electric Lion," said George Hadley.

"There's no Africa in the nursery," said Peter simply.

"Oh, come now, Peter. We know better."

"I don't remember any Africa," said Peter to Wendy. "Do you?"

"No."

"Run see and come tell."

She obeyed

"Wendy, come back here!" said George Hadley, but she was gone. The house lights followed her like a flock of fireflies. Too late, he realized he had forgotten to lock the nursery door after his last inspection.

"Wendy'll look and come tell us," said Peter.

"She doesn't have to tell me. I've seen it."

"I'm sure you're mistaken, Father."

"I'm not, Peter. Come along now."

But Wendy was back. "It's not Africa," she said breathlessly.

"We'll see about this," said George Hadley, and they all walked down the hall together and opened the nursery door.

There was a green, lovely forest, a lovely river, a purple mountain, high voices singing, and Rima, lovely and mysterious, lurking in the trees with colorful flights of butterflies, like animated bouquets, lingering in her long hair. The African veldtland was gone. The lions were gone. Only Rima was here now, singing a song so beautiful that it brought tears to your eyes.

George Hadley looked in at the changed scene. "Go to bed," he said to the children.

They opened their mouths.

"You heard me," he said.

They went off to the air closet, where a wind sucked them like brown leaves up the flue to their slumber rooms.

George Hadley walked through the singing glade and picked up something that lay in the corner near where the lions had been. He walked slowly back to his wife.

"What is that?" she asked.

"An old wallet of mine," he said.

He showed it to her. The smell of hot grass was on it and the smell of a lion. There were drops of saliva on it, it had been chewed, and there were blood smears on both sides.

He closed the nursery door and locked it, tight.

In the middle of the night he was still awake and he knew his wife was awake. "Do you think Wendy changed it?" she said at last, in the dark room.

"Of course."

"Made it from a veldt into a forest and put Rima there instead of lions?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know. But it's staying locked until I find out."

"How did your wallet get there?"

"I don't know anything," he said, "except that I'm beginning to be sorry we bought that room for the children. If children are neurotic at all, a room like that -"

"It's supposed to help them work off their neuroses in a healthful way."

"I'm starting to wonder." He stared at the ceiling.

"We've given the children everything they ever wanted. Is this our reward—secrecy, disobedience?"

"Who was it said, 'Children are carpets, they should be stepped on occasionally'? We've never lifted a hand. They're insufferable—let's admit it. They come and go when they like; they treat us as if we were offspring.

They're spoiled and we're spoiled."

"They've been acting funny ever since you forbade them to take the rocket to New York a few months ago."

"They're not old enough to do that alone, I explained."

"Nevertheless, I've noticed they've been decidedly cool toward us since."

"I think I'll have David McClean come tomorrow morning to have a look at Africa."

"But it's not Africa now, it's Green Mansions country and Rima."

"I have a feeling it'll be Africa again before then."

A moment later they heard the screams.

Two screams. Two people screaming from downstairs. And then a roar of lions.

"Wendy and Peter aren't in their rooms," said his wife.

He lay in his bed with his beating heart. "No," he said. "They've broken into the nursery."

"Those screams—they sound familiar."

"Do they?"

"Yes, awfully."

And although their beds tried very hard, the two adults couldn't be rocked to sleep for another hour. A smell of cats was in the night air.

"Father?" said Peter.

"Yes."

Peter looked at his shoes. He never looked at his father any more, nor at his mother. "You aren't going to lock up the nursery for good, are you?"

"That all depends."

"On what?" snapped Peter.

"On you and your sister. If you intersperse this Africa with a little variety—oh, Sweden perhaps, or Denmark or China -"

"I thought we were free to play as we wished."

"You are, within reasonable bounds."

"What's wrong with Africa, Father?"

"Oh, so now you admit you have been conjuring up Africa, do you?"

"I wouldn't want the nursery locked up," said Peter coldly. "Ever."

"Matter of fact, we're thinking of turning the whole house off for about a month. Live sort of a carefree one-for-all existence."

"That sounds dreadful! Would I have to tie my own shoes instead of letting the shoe tier do it? And brush my own teeth and comb my hair and give myself a bath?"

"It would be fun for a change, don't you think?"

"No, it would be horrid. I didn't like it when you took out the picture painter last month."

"That's because I wanted you to learn to paint all by yourself, son."

"I don't want to do anything but look and listen and smell; what else is there to do?"

"All right, go play in Africa."

"Will you shut off the house sometime soon?"

"We're considering it."

"I don't think you'd better consider it any more, Father."

"I won't have any threats from my son!"

"Very well." And Peter strolled off to the nursery.

"Am I on time?" said David McClean.

"Breakfast?" asked George Hadley.

"Thanks, had some. What's the trouble?"

"David, you're a psychologist."

"I should hope so."

"Well, then, have a look at our nursery. You saw it a year ago when you dropped by; did you notice anything peculiar about it then?"

"Can't say I did; the usual violences, a tendency toward a slight paranoia here or there, usual in children because they feel persecuted by parents constantly, but, oh, really nothing."

They walked down the hall. "I locked the nursery up," explained the father, "and the children broke back into it during the night. I let them stay so they could form the patterns for you to see."

There was a terrible screaming from the nursery.

"There it is," said George Hadley. "See what you make of it."

They walked in on the children without rapping.

The screams had faded. The lions were feeding.

"Run outside a moment, children," said George Hadley. "No, don't change the mental combination. Leave the walls as they are. Get!"

With the children gone, the two men stood studying the lions clustered at a distance, eating with great relish whatever it was they had caught.

"I wish I knew what it was," said George Hadley. "Sometimes I can almost see. Do you think if I brought high-powered binoculars here and -"

David McClean laughed dryly. "Hardly." He turned to study all four alls. "How long has this been going on?"

"A little over a month."

"It certainly doesn't feel good."

"I want facts, not feelings."

"My dear George, a psychologist never saw a fact in his life. He only hears about feelings; vague things. This doesn't feel good, I tell you.

Trust my hunches and my instincts. I have a nose for something bad. This is very bad. My advice to you is to have the whole damn room torn down and your children brought to me every day during the next year for treatment."

"Is it that bad?"

"I'm afraid so. One of the original uses of these nurseries was so that we could study the patterns left on the walls by the child's mind, study at our leisure, and help the child. In this case, however, the room has become a channel toward-destructive thoughts, instead of a release away from them."

"Didn't you sense this before?"

"I sensed only that you had spoiled your children more than most. And now you're letting them down in some way. What way?"

"I wouldn't let them go to New York."

"What else?"

"I've taken a few machines from the house and threatened them, a month ago, with closing up the nursery unless they did their homework. I did close it for a few days to show I meant business."

"Ah, ha!"

"Does that mean anything?"

"Everything. Where before they had a Santa Claus now they have a Scrooge. Children prefer Santas. You've let this room and this house replace you and your wife in your children's affections. This room is their mother and father, far more important in their lives than their real parents. And now you come along and want to shut it off. No wonder there's hatred here.

You can feel it coming out of the sky. Feel that sun. George, you'll have to change your life. Like too many others, you've built it around creature comforts. Why, you'd starve tomorrow if something went wrong in your kitchen. You wouldn't know how to tap an egg. Nevertheless, turn everything off. Start new. It'll take time. But we'll make good children out of bad in a year, wait and see."

"But won't the shock be too much for the children, shutting the room up abruptly, for good?"

"I don't want them going any deeper into this, that's all."

The lions were finished with their red feast.

The lions were standing on the edge of the clearing watching the two men.

"Now I'm feeling persecuted," said McClean. "Let's get out of here. I never have cared for these damned rooms. Make me nervous."

"The lions look real, don't they?" said George Hadley. I don't suppose there's any way—"

"What?"

"—that they could become real?"

"Not that I know."

"Some flaw in the machinery, a tampering or something?"

"No."

They went to the door.

"I don't imagine the room will like being turned off," said the father.

"Nothing ever likes to die - even a room."

"I wonder if it hates me for wanting to switch it off?"

"Paranoia is thick around here today," said David McClean. "You can follow it like a spoor.

Hello." He bent and picked up a bloody scarf. "This yours?"

"No." George Hadley's face was rigid. "It belongs to Lydia."

They went to the fuse box together and threw the switch that killed the nursery.

The two children were in hysterics. They screamed and pranced and threw things. They yelled and sobbed and swore and jumped at the furniture.

"You can't do that to the nursery, you can't!"

"Now, children."

The children flung themselves onto a couch, weeping.

"George," said Lydia Hadley, "turn on the nursery, just for a few moments. You can't be so abrupt."

"No."

"You can't be so cruel..."

"Lydia, it's off, and it stays off. And the whole damn house dies as of here and now. The more I see of the mess we've put ourselves in, the more it sickens me. We've been contemplating our mechanical, electronic navels for too long. My God, how we need a breath of honest air!"

And he marched about the house turning off the voice clocks, the stoves, the heaters, the shoe shiners, the shoe lacers, the body scrubbers and swabbers and massagers, and every other machine he could put his hand to.

The house was full of dead bodies, it seemed. It felt like a mechanical cemetery. So silent. None of the humming hidden energy of machines waiting to function at the tap of a button.

"Don't let them do it!" wailed Peter at the ceiling, as if he was talking to the house, the nursery.

"Don't let Father kill everything." He turned to his father. "Oh, I hate you!"

"Insults won't get you anywhere."

"I wish you were dead!"

"We were, for a long while. Now we're going to really start living.

Instead of being handled and massaged, we're going to live."

Wendy was still crying and Peter joined her again. "Just a moment, just one moment, just another moment of nursery," they wailed.

"Oh, George," said the wife, "it can't hurt."

"All right—all right, if they'll just shut up. One minute, mind you, and then off forever."

"Daddy, Daddy, Daddy!" sang the children, smiling with wet faces.

"And then we're going on a vacation. David McClean is coming back in half an hour to help us move out and get to the airport. I'm going to dress.

You turn the nursery on for a minute, Lydia, just a minute, mind you."

And the three of them went babbling off while he let himself be vacuumed upstairs through the air flue and set about dressing himself. A minute later Lydia appeared.

"I'll be glad when we get away," she sighed.

"Did you leave them in the nursery?"

"I wanted to dress too. Oh, that horrid Africa. What can they see in it?"

"Well, in five minutes we'll be on our way to Iowa. Lord, how did we ever get in this house? What prompted us to buy a nightmare?"

"Pride, money, foolishness."

"I think we'd better get downstairs before those kids get engrossed with those damned beasts again."

Just then they heard the children calling, "Daddy, Mommy, come quick - quick!"

They went downstairs in the air flue and ran down the hall. The children were nowhere in sight.

"Wendy? Peter!"

They ran into the nursery. The veldtland was empty save for the lions waiting, looking at them.

"Peter, Wendy?"

The door slammed.

"Wendy, Peter!"

George Hadley and his wife whirled and ran back to the door.

"Open the door!" cried George Hadley, trying the knob. "Why, they've locked it from the outside!

Peter!" He beat at the door. "Open up!"

He heard Peter's voice outside, against the door.

"Don't let them switch off the nursery and the house," he was saying.

Mr. and Mrs. George Hadley beat at the door. "Now, don't be ridiculous, children. It's time to go.

Mr. McClean'll be here in a minute and..."

And then they heard the sounds.

The lions on three sides of them, in the yellow veldt grass, padding through the dry straw, rumbling and roaring in their throats.

The lions.

Mr. Hadley looked at his wife and they turned and looked back at the beasts edging slowly forward crouching, tails stiff.

Mr. and Mrs. Hadley screamed.

And suddenly they realized why those other screams had sounded familiar.

"Well, here I am," said David McClean in the nursery doorway, "Oh, hello." He stared at the two children seated in the center of the open glade eating a little picnic lunch. Beyond them was the water hole and the yellow veldtland; above was the hot sun. He began to perspire. "Where are your father and mother?"

The children looked up and smiled. "Oh, they'll be here directly."

"Good, we must get going." At a distance Mr. McClean saw the lions fighting and clawing and then quieting down to feed in silence under the shady trees.

He squinted at the lions with his hand tip to his eyes.

Now the lions were done feeding. They moved to the water hole to drink.

A shadow flickered over Mr. McClean's hot face. Many shadows flickered.

The vultures were dropping down the blazing sky.

"A cup of tea?" asked Wendy in the silence.

2 Survey SQ text:

Instructions:

Please answer the following questionnaire according to your experience as a reader of a second language. Then, in the following assigned text, read and highlight the words and phrases you do not know. Remember to submit the task before two weeks on ev@.

Part 1 Reading Habits

1. How often do you read?

- a. Daily
- b. At least weekly
- c. Less often
- d. Never

2. Why do you read?

- a. Pleasure
- b. Academic purposes
- c. Information
- d. Other _____

3. Do you think you read enough?

- a. Yes
- b. No, but I would like to

c. No, and I don't want to

4. Preferred types of fiction

a. Romance/ r'ships

f. Animal-related

b. Sci-fi/ fantasy

g. Comedy

c. War

h. Poetry

d. Crime/detective

i. Horror/ghosts

e. Adventure

j. Do not read fiction

5. How many books do you have in your home?

a. 1-10

b. 11-50

c. 51-100

d. 101-250

e. 250+

6. Access to resources at home. Mark all options that correspond.

a. Books of your own

b. Desk on your own

c. Computer

d. Daily newspaper

e. Magazines

Part 2

7. What elements do you consider difficult when reading?

- a. Literary aspects
- b. Grammar features
- c. Sociocultural information
- d. Vocabulary

8. What do you do when you misunderstand something in the text?

- a. Use a dictionary
- b. Continue reading
- c. Guessing from context
- d. Re read

9. Do you read more frequently in:

- a. English
- b. Spanish

10. Does it take longer to read in L2?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. I do not know

11. Why do you think that is?

12. How many times do you read a text when it is in a second language?

SQ

by Ursula K. Le Guin

I think what DrSpeakie has done is wonderful. He is a wonderful man.I believe that. I believe that people need beliefs. I really don't know what would happen.

And if Dr. Speakie hadn't truly believe in his work, he couldn't possibly have done what he did where would he have found the courage? What he did proves his genuine sincerity.

There was a time when a lot of people tried to cast doubts on him. They said he was seeking power.That was never true. From the very beginning all he wanted was to help people and make a better world. The people who called him a power seeker and a dictator were just the same ones who used to say that Hitler was insane and Nixon was insane world leaders were insane and the arms race was insane and our misuse of natural resources was insane and the whole world civilization was insane and suicidal. They were always saying that. And they said it about Dr. Speakie. But he stopped all that insanity, didn't he? So he was right all along, and he was right to believe in his beliefs. I came to work for him when he was named the Chief of the Psychometric

Bureau. I used to work at the U.N, and when the world government took over the New York U.N Building, they transferred me up to the thirty fifth floor to be the head secretary in Dr. Speakie's office. I knew already that it was a position of great responsibility, and I was quite excited the whole week before my new job began. I was so curious to meet Dr. Speakie, because of course he was already famous. I was there right at the dot of nine on Monday morning, and when he came in, it was so wonderful. He looked so kind. You could tell that the weight of his responsibilities was always in his mind, but he looked so healthy and positive, and was a bounce in his step. I used to think it was as if he had rubber balls in the toes of his shoes. He smiled and shook my hand and said in such a friendly, confident voice, "And you must be Mrs Smith! I've heard wonderful thing about you. We're going to have a wonderful team here, Mrs. Smith!

Later on he called me by my first name, of course.

That first year we were mostly busy with information. The World Government Presidium and all the Member States had to be fully informed about the nature and purpose of the SQ Test, before the actual implementation of its application could be eventualize. That was good for me because in preparing all that information I learned all about it myself. Often taking dictation, learned about it from Dr. Speakie's very lips. By May I was enough of an "expert" that I was able to prepare the Basic SQ Information Pamphlet for publication just from Dr. Speakie's notes. It was such fascinating work. As soon as I began to understand the SQ Test Plan, I began to believe in it. That was true of everybody else in the office and in the Bureau. Dr. Speakie's sincerity and scientific enthusiasm were infectious. Right from the beginning we had to take the Test every quarter, of course, and some of the secretaries used to be nervous before they took it, but I never was. It was so obvious that the Test was *right*. If you scored under 50 it was nice to know that you are sane, but even if you scored over 50 that was fine too, because then you could be *helped*. And anyway it is always best to know the truth about yourself.

As soon as the Information service was functioning smoothly, Dr. Speakie transferred the main thrust of his attention to the implementation of Evaluator training, and planning for the structurization of the Cure Centers, only he changed the name to SQ Achievement Centers. It seemed a very big job even then. We certainly has no idea how big the job would finally turn out to be!

As he said at the beginning, we were a very good team. We all worked hard, but there were always rewards.

I remember one wonderful day. I has accompanied Dr. Speakie to the Meeting of the Board of the Psychometric Bureau. The emissary fromthe State of Brazil announced that his State had adopted the Bureau Recommendations for Universal Testing-- we had known that that was going to be announced. But then the delegate from Libya and the delegate from China announced that their States had adopted the Test too! Oh, Dr. Speakie's face was just like the sun for a minute, just *shining*. I wish I could remember exactly what he said, especially to the chinese delegate, because of course China was a very big state and its decision was very influential. Unfortunately I do not have his exact words because I was changing the tape in the recorder. He said something like, "Gentlemen, this is an historic day for humanity."

Then he began to talk at once about the effective implementation of the Application Centers, where people would take the Test, and the Achievement Centers, where they would go if they score over 50, and how to establish the Test Administrations and Evaluations infrastructure on such a large scale, and so on. He was always modest and practical.He would rather talk about doing the job than talk about what an important job it was. He used to say, "Once you know what you're doing, the only thing you need to think about is how to do it," I believed that that is deeply true.

From then on, we could hand over the Information program to a subdepartment and concentrate on How to Do It. Those were exciting times! So many States joined the plan, one after another.

When I think of all we had to do, I wonder that we didn't all go crazy! Some of the office staff did fail their quarterly Test, in fact. But most of us working in the Executive Office with Dr. Speakie remained quite stable, even when we were on the job all day and half the night. I think his presence was an inspiration. He was always calm and positive, even when he had to arrange things like training 113,000 Chinese Evaluators in three months. "You can always find out 'how' if you just know the 'why'!" he would say. And we always did.

When you think back over it, it really is quite amazing what a big job it was-- so much bigger than anybody, even Dr. Speakie, had realized it would be. It just changed everything. You only realize that when you think back to what things used to be like. Can you imagine when we began planning Universal Testing for the State of China, we only allowed for eleven hundred Achievement Centers, with sixty-eight hundred Staff? It really seems like a joke. But it is not. I was going through some of the old files yesterday, making sure everything is in order, and I found the first China Implementation Plan, with those figures written down in black and white.

I believe the reason why even Dr. Speakie was slow to realize the magnitude of the operation was that even though he was a great scientist, he was also an optimist. He just kept hoping against hope that the average scores would begin to go down, and this prevented him from seeing that universal application of the SQ Test was eventually going to involve everybody either as Inmates or Staff.

When most of the Russias and all the African States had adopted the Recommendations and were busy implementing them, the debates in the General Assembly of the World Government got very excited. That was the period when so many bad things were said about the Test and about Dr. Speakie. I used to get quite angry, reading The World Times reports of debates. When I went as his secretary with Dr. Speakie to General Assembly meetings I had to sit and listen in person to people insulting him personally, casting aspersions on his motives and questioning his scientific integrity and even his sincerity. Many of those people were very disagreeable and

obviously unbalanced. But he never lost his temper. He would just stand up and prove to them, again, that the SQ Test did actually literally scientifically show whether the testee was sane or insane, and the results could be proved, and all psychometrists accepted them. So the Test Ban People couldn't do anything but shout about freedom and accuse Dr. Speakie and the Psychometric Bureau of trying to "turn the world into a huge insane asylum". He would always answer quietly and firmly, asking them how they thought a person could be "free" if they lacked mental health. What they called freedom might well be a delusional system with no contact with reality. In order to find out, all they had to do was to become testees. "Mental health is freedom" he said. "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty" they say, and now we have an eternally vigilant watchdog: the SQ Test. Only the testees can be truly free!"

There really was no answer they could make to that. Sooner or later the delegates even from Member States where the Test Ban movement was strong would volunteer to take the SQ Test to prove that their mental health was adequate to their responsibilities. Then the ones who passed the test and remained in office would begin working for Universal Application in their home State. Riots and demonstrations, and things like the burning of the Houses of Parliament in London in the State of England (where the Nor-Europ SQ center was housed) and the Vatican Rebellion, and the Chilean H-bomb, was the work of insane fanatics appealing to the most unstable elements of the populace. Such fanatics, as Dr. Speakie and Dr. Waltraute pointed out in their Memorandum to the Presidium, deliberately aroused and used the proven instability of the crowd, "mob psychosis". The only response to mass delusion of that kind was immediate implementation of the Testing Program in the disturbed States, and immediate amplification of the Asylum Program.

That was Dr. Speakie's own decision, by the way, to rename the SQ Achievement Centers "Asylums." He took the word right out of his enemies' mouths. He said: "An asylum means a place of shelter, a place of cure. Let there be no stigma attached to the word 'insane', to the word

‘asylum’, to the words ‘insane asylum’! No! For the asylum is the haven of mental health- the place of cure, where the anxious gain peace, where the weak gain strength, where the prisoners of inadequate reality assessment win their way to freedom! Proudly let us use the word ‘asylum’. Proudly let us go to the asylum, to work to regain our own God-given mental health, or to work with others less fortunate to help them win back their own inalienable right to mental health. And let one word be written large over the door of every asylum in the world- ‘WELCOME!’

Those words are from his great speech at the General Assembly on the day World Universal Application was decreed by the Presidium. Once or twice a year I listen to my tape of that speech. Although I am too busy ever to get really depressed, now and then I feel the need of a tiny “pick-me-up”. And so I play that tape. It never fails to send me back to my duties inspired and refreshed.

Considering all the work there was to do, as the Test scores continued to come in always a little higher than the Psychometric Bureau analysts estimated, the world Government Presidium did a wonderful job for the two years that it administered Universal Testing. There was a long period, six months, when the scores seemed to have stabilized, with just about half of the tests scoring over 50 and half under 50. At that time it was thought that if 40 percent of the mentally healthy were assigned to Asylum Staff work, the other 60 percent could keep up routine basic world functions such as farming, power supply, transportation, etc. This proportion had to be reversed when they found that over 60 percent of the mentally healthy were volunteering for Staff work, in order to be with their loved ones in the Asylums. There was some trouble then with the routine basic world functions functioning. However, even then contingency plans were being made for the inclusion of farmlands, factories, power plants, etc, in the Asylum Territories, and the assignment of routine world functions work as Rehabilitation Therapy, so that the Asylums could become totally self-supporting if it became advisable. This was President Kim’s special care, and he worked for it all through his term of office. Events proved the wisdom of his planning. He

seemed such a nice, wise little man. I still remember the day when Dr. Speakie came into the office and I knew at once that something was wrong. Not that he ever got really depressed or reacted with inopportune emotion, but it was as if the rubber balls in his shoes had gone just a little bit flat. There was the slightest tremor of true sorrow in his voice when he said, "Mary Ann, we've had a bit of bad news I'm afraid." Then he smiled to reassure me, because he knew what a strain we were all working under, and certainly didn't want to give anybody a shock that might push their score up higher on the next quarterly Test! "It's President Kim," he said, and I knew at once- I knew he didn't mean the President was ill or dead.

"Over 50?" I asked, and he just said quietly and sadly, "55."

Poor little President Kim, working so efficiently all that three months while mental ill health was growing in him! It was very sad and also a useful warning. High-level consultations were begun at once, as soon as President Kim was committed; and the decision was made to administer the Test monthly, instead of quarterly. To anyone in an executive position.

Even before this decision, the Universal scores had begun rising again.

Dr. Speakie was not distressed, He had already predicted that this rise as highly probable during the transition period to World Sanity. As the number of the mentally healthy living outside the Asylum grew fewer, the strain on them kept growing greater, and they became more liable to break down under it-just as poor President Kim had done. Later, he predicted, when the Rehabs began coming out of the Asylum in ever increasing numbers, this stress would decrease. Also the crowding in the Asylum would decrease, so that the Staff would have more time to work on individually orientated therapy, and this would lead to a still more dramatic increase in the number of Rehabs released. Finally, when the therapy process was completely perfected, there would be no Asylums left in the world at all. Everybody would be either mentally healthy or a Rehab, or "neonormal", as DrSpeakie liked to call it.

It was the trouble in the State of Australia that precipitated the Government crisis. Some Psychometric Bureau officials accused the Australian Evaluators of actually falsifying Test returns, but that is impossible since all the computers are linked to the World Government Central Computer Bank in Keokuk. DrSpeakie suspected that the Australian Evaluators had been falsifying *the Test itself*, and insisted that they themselves all be tested immediately. Of course he was right. It had been a conspiracy, and the suspiciously low Australian Test scores had resulted from the use of false Test. Many of the conspirators tested higher than 80 when forced to take the genuine Test. The State Government in Canberra had been unforgivably lax. If they had just admitted it everything would have been all right. But they got hysterical, and moved the State Government to a sheep station in Queensland, and tried to withdraw from the World Government. (DrSpeakie said this was a typical mass psychosis: reality evasion, followed by fugue and autistic withdrawal.) Unfortunately the Presidium seemed to be paralyzed, Australia seceded on the day before the President and the Presidium were due to take their monthly Test, and probably they were afraid of overstraining their SQ with agonizing decisions. So the Psychometric Bureau volunteered to handle the episode. DrSpeakie himself flew on the plane with the H-bombs, and helped to drop the information leaflets. He never lacked personal courage. When the Australian incident was over, it turned out that most of the Presidium, including President Singh, had scored over 50. So the Psychometric Bureau took over their functions temporarily. Even on a long-term basis this made good sense, since all the problems now facing the World Government had to do with administering and evaluating the Test, training the Staff, and providing full self-sufficiency structuration to all Asylums.

What this meant in personal terms was that DrSpeakie, as Chief of the Psychometric Bureau, was now Interim President of the United States of the World. As his personal secretary I was, I will admit it, just terribly proud of him. But he never let it go to his head.

He was so modest. Sometimes he used to say to people, when he introduced me, “This is Mary Ann, my secretary,” he’d say with a little twinkle, “and if it wasn’t for her I’s have been scoring over 50 long ago!”

There were times, as the World SQ scores rose and rose, that I would become a little discouraged. Once the week’s Test figures came in on the readout, and the *average* score was 71. I said, “Doctor, there are moments I believe the whole world is going insane!”

But he said “Look at it this way, Mary Ann. Look at those people in the Asylum - 3.1 billion inmates now, and 1.8 billion staff – but look at them. What are they doing? They’re pursuing their therapy, doing rehabilitation work on the farms and in the factories, and striving all the time, too, to *help* each other towards mental health. The preponderant inverse sanity quotient is certainly very high at the moment; they’re mostly insane, yes. But you have to admire them. They are fighting for mental health. They will – they *will* win through!” And then he dropped his voice and said as if to himself, gazing out the window and bouncing just a little on the balls of his feet, “if I didn’t believe that, I couldn’t go on.”

And I knew he was thinking of his wife.

Mrs. Speakie had been in the Greater Los Angeles Territory Asylum for years now.

Anybody who still thinks DrSpeakie wasn’t sincere should think about that for a minute! He gave up everything for his belief.

And even when the Asylum were all running quite well, and the epidemics in South Africa and the famines in Texas and the Ukraine were under control, still the workload on DrSpeakie never got any lighter, because every month the personnel of the Psychometric Bureau got smaller, since some of them always flunked their monthly Test and were committed to Bethesda. I never could keep any of my secretarial staff any more for longer than a month or two. It was harder and harder to find replacements too, because most sane young people volunteered for Stuff work in the Asylums, since life was much easier and more sociable inside the Asylum than outside.

Everything so convenient, and lots of friends and acquaintances! I used to positively envy those girls! But I know where my job was.

At least it was much less hectic here in the U.N. Building, or the Psychometry Tower as it had been renamed long ago. Often there wouldn't be anybody around the whole building all day long but DrSpeakie and myself, and maybe Bill the janitor (Bill scored 32 regular as clockwork every quarter). All the restaurants were closed, in fact most of Manhattan was closed, but we had fun picnicking in the old General Assembly Hall. And there was always the odd call from Buenos Aires or Reykjavik, asking DrSpeakie's advice as Interim President about some problem, to break the silence.

But last November 8, I will never forget the date, when DrSpeakie was dictating the Referendum for World Economic Growth for the next five-year period, he suddenly interrupted himself. "By the way, Mary Ann," he said, "how was your last score?"

We had taken the Test two days before, on the sixth. We always took the Test every first Monday. DrSpeakie never would have dreamed of excepting himself from Universal Testing regulations.

"I score twelve," I said, before I thought how strange it was of him to ask. Or, not just to ask, because we often mentioned our score to each other, but to ask *then*, in the middle of executing important World Government business.

"Wonderful," he said, shaking his head. "You're wonderful, Mary Ann! Down two from last month's Test, aren't you?"

"I'm always between ten and fourteen," I said. "Nothing new about that, Doctor."

"Some day," he said, and his face took on the expression it had when he gave his great speech about the Asylum, "some day, this world of ours will be governed by men fit to govern it. Men whose SQ score is zero. Zero, Mary Ann!"

“Well, my goodness, Doctor,” I said jokingly - his intensity almost alarmed me a little – “even *you* never scored lower than

Three, and you haven’t done that for a year or more now!”

He stared at me almost as if he didn’t see me. It was quite uncanny. “Some day,” he said in just the same way, “nobody in the world will have a Quotient higher than fifty. Some day, nobody in the world will have a Quotient higher than thirty! Higher than ten! The Therapy will be perfected.

I was only the diagnostician. But the Therapy will be perfected! The cure will be found! Some day!” And he went on staring at me, and then he said, “DO you know what my score was on Monday?”

“Seven,” I guessed promptly. The last time he had told me his score it had been seven.

“Ninety-two,” he said.

I laughed, because he seemed to be laughing. He had always had a puckish sense of humor. But I thought we really should get back to the World Economic Growth Plan, so I said laughingly,

“That really is a very bad joke, Doctor!”

“Ninety.two,” he said, “and you don’t believe me, Mary Ann, but that that’s because of the cantaloupe.”

I said, “What cantaloupe, Doctor?” and that was when he jumped across his desk and began to try to bite through my jugular vein.

I used a judo hold and shouted to Bill the janitor, and when he came I called a robo-ambulance to take DrSpeakie to Bathesda Asylum.

That was six months ago. I visit DrSpeakie every Saturday. It is very sad. He is in the McLean Area, which is the Violent Ward, and every time he sees me he screams and foams. But I do not take it personally. One should never take mental ill health personally. When the Therapy is perfected he will be completely rehabilitated. Meanwhile, I just hold on here. Bill keeps the floors clean, and I run The World Government. It really isn’t as difficult as you might think.

3 Questionnaire The Veldt Reading:

Post Reading Specific Questions

The Veldt Reading

1. What is the genre of the veldt story?

2. Did you agree with George when he turned off the nursery?

3. Mc Clean says ‘Where before they had a Santa Claus, now they have a Scrooge’. What does he mean?

4. What did the lions finally do? How did you feel when you realized?

4 Questionnaire SQ Reading:

Post Reading Specific Questions

SQ. Reading

1. What is the genre of the SQ story?

2. What is the influence of the SQ test in the attitude that Doctor Speakie has at the end of the story?

3. Who was Nixon? Why does the secretary compared him with Doctor Speakie?

4. Would you change your test results like DrSpeakie?

5 Interview

Interview questions

1. How many times did you read the text?

a.1

b.2

c.3

d.More than 3

2. Did you understand the text better before/after looking the dictionary?

3. Did you return to read difficult passages?

a.yes

b.no

4. Would you like to read another story from the same author?

a.yes

b.no

5. Did you talk about the story with somebody else?

a.Yes

b.No

If your answer is yes. Why?

a.boring

b.entertaining

c.to clarify doubts

6. What did you find difficult in the text?
