La Lectura en la Educación Primaria y su Conexión con la Motivación y los Problemas Sociales

Reading in Elementary School and Its Connection to Motivation and Social Issues

La lecture dans l'enseignement primaire et son lien avec la motivation et les problèmes sociaux

Lizney Acevedo Acero[3]
Manuel Mateo Alcalá Ibáñez[4]
David de Jesús Gaviria Sánchez[5]
Diana Marcela Orrego Ríos[6]
Claudia Marcela Suescún Giraldo[7]

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to increase the levels of reading motivation in English as a foreign language in fifth-grade students from a Colombian public school located in the municipality of Bello, Antioquia, by means of the social features of their immediate context. It was first necessary to diagnose which key factors influence students' level of motivation to intervene appropriately by implementing short-illustrated stories, such factors were: their attitude towards reading in English, how their social context triggers learning in them, their reading preferences in general, as - well as their current language proficiency level. Only by regarding these aspects, an alternative to

3   Graduate from the BA in EFL Teaching from Luis Amigo Catholic University, Medellín.
4   Graduate from the BA in EFL Teaching from Luis Amigo Catholic University, Medellín, Primary School Teacher at The Colombus School, Medellín.
5   Graduate from the BA in EFL Teaching from Luis Amigo Catholic University, Medellín, English Teacher at Smart Academy, Medellín.
6   Graduate from the BA in EFL Teaching from Luis Amigo Catholic University, Medellín.
7   Full time professor at Luis Amigo Catholic University, Medellín.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

31

approaching literacy processes could be applied by teachers and also be beneficial to students' learning experience. This research was conceived from a qualitative approach and an action research method to achieve a better understanding of the study object and raise awareness among the academic community about being critical towards students' own context. Thus, participant observation, journals and semi-structured interviews were selected as the research instruments to test the initial categories of the study.

Key words: Literacy, Reading Motivation, Social Context, EFL, Social Issues

Resumen

El propósito de este estudio fue aumentar los niveles de motivación lectora en inglés como lengua extranjera en estudiantes de quinto grado de una escuela pública colombiana ubicada en el municipio de Bello, Antioquia, a través de las características sociales de su entorno inmediato. Primero fue necesario diagnosticar los factores clave que influyen en el nivel de motivación de los estudiantes para intervenir adecuadamente mediante la implementación de historias ilustradas cortas, tales factores fueron: sus actitudes hacia la lectura en inglés, cómo su contexto social desencadena el aprendizaje en ellos, sus preferencias de lectura en general, así como su nivel actual de dominio del idioma. Sólo con base en estos aspectos, los docentes podrían aplicar una alternativa para abordar los procesos de literacidad y también ser beneficiosa para la experiencia de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. La investigación fue concebida desde un enfoque cualitativo y una metodología de investigación-acción para alcanzar una mejor comprensión del objeto de estudio y crear conciencia entre la comunidad académica acerca de ser crítico con el contexto de los estudiantes. Por lo tanto, la observación participante, diarios y entrevistas semiestructuradas fueron seleccionados como los instrumentos de investigación para testear las categorías iniciales del estudio.

Palabras clave: Literacidad, Motivación hacia la Lectura, Contexto Social, ILE, Problemas Sociales.

Introduction

This research is as a response to the gap between the low English level in fifth grade students of a public school in Bello, Colombia and the social issues that surround the neighborhood in which the school is located. This gap needs to be reduced by increasing the levels of motivation of these students in vulnerable circumstances regarding reading in EFL (English as a foreign language). Thus, the project aimed

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

32

at encouraging meaningful reading within the social issues that students are familiar with as a means of creating a social change that promoted reflection upon those issues.

Regarding social context, it can be said that it is both "a background variable affecting the learning" and "an essential part of cognitive development" (Mondada and Pekarek Doehler 2004, as cited in Glohami, Sharifah, & Mustapha, 2012, p73). Context deeply influences teaching and learning processes (Jacknic, 2008, as cited in Gholami, Rahman, & Mustapha, 2012); as a result, it would not be appropriate to state that "learning does not occur in context", since "the context actually shapes cognitive development" and it is a result of the individual's interaction with it (Butt, Khan, & Wilayat, 2012, p. 84).

In this regard, it is important to learn about the influence that social issues have on students' educational process as, in turn, such social issues are presented in the context where learning takes place and permeate the development of learning. On the other hand, there is an emerging question about how social issues from learners' context can specifically permeate EFL in Colombia, as the Ministry of National Education acknowledges that English owns a strong importance as a universal language, so it intends to enhance the quality of English teaching to achieve a better performance by Colombian students so that they have a language in common to access today's world (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006). For this reason, learning English has become mandatory and several language policies have been created along last decades to address the need to communicate in English as an essential competence to attend the demands of a globalized world; however, results of standardized tests prove Colombian learners' English proficiency have not been fully satisfactory, and shows that one out of every six students have a poor development and performance on this competence (ICFES, 2016).

This situation has a strong impact on the quality of education and the development of the country if the importance of speaking English is considered "to reach social, academic and economic progress around the world" (Escobar Fandiño, Muñoz, & Silva Velandia, 2019, p. 1). Thus, by considering the given results and lack of successful performance of speaking English at a basic competence in Colombia, it can be inferred that there is a problem with the learning process of EFL due to decontextualization and lack of attachment in terms of learners' context and the intended curriculum that is developed and carried out in schools along the country. In this sense, motivation for learning a foreign language can arise if learners find learning attached to their contexts, given that each student has a particular culture with specific characteristics, which influence him or her, which is precisely expressed "in terms of one's attitudes,

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

33

beliefs, personality, characteristics, ideals, expectations, etc." and applies to language learning (Gardner, 2007, p. 13).

Motivation facilitates attitudes toward the target language and the resulting outputs that come from the learning process of it (Kazantseva, Valiakhmetova, Minisheva, Anokhina, & Latypova, 2016, p. 7). Regarding that factor, as well as students' social contexts, could serve as a strategy for promoting learning and specifically, for enhancing reading processes in the language classroom, since "motivation plays a fundamental role in the learning process" (Dörnyei, 2001, as cited in Vibulphol, 2016, p. 64). In addition, it "nourishes" the engine to keep going, therefore "without motivation", students may lose the will of learning and those who have decided to learn, may not be able to deal with motivation once they have difficulties in the course (Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner, 2007 as cited in Vibulphol, 2016, p. 64). It should also be considered that not all students learn at the same pace, so several strategies or should be devised, so that everyone is active and motivated to respond positively to what is asked in class. On the other hand, if there is no relation to what is taught and students' reality, then students will lose interest as it usually has happened in school classrooms.

In this sense, reflecting upon the repercussions of using the students' context as well as analyzing the chosen public-school setting was essential to determine a possible relationship between the development of reading motivation and students' social issues. In order to get enough input from students to define the research process action path, a series of interviews and observation journals were implemented as data collection tools to determine how should be the most appropriate way to intervene. Short stories specifically designed took place according to students' likes, social problems, and motivation features, this will be discussed later.

Claire Kramsch and Thomas Nolden (1994) state that reading in a foreign language is not a passive procedure, but an "active bottom-up" and "top-down process": by relating the words on the page with the general meaning coming from it, and in turn by relating the words on the page, readers construct for themselves configurations of expectations called "schemata" that provide them with the tools to preview the meaning of words regarding the context. Researchers have stated that the meaning of "authenticity of a text is not in the text itself", but instead, that it comes from the "negotiation between the reader and the text" (p. 28). Given this, reading is not about (or shouldn't be about) discovering the secret meaning the author has put carefully behind his/her words, but

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

34

of a process of discovering a relation between what the text says and what reader infers. In other words, reading is a form of "authentication" (Kramsch & Nolden, 1994, p. 28).

However, the linguistic and cognitive perspectives of the act of reading are sometimes not enough to implement a good pedagogical methodology. Approaches to reading are different depending on several factors, such as: cultural development and its features, particularly if these backgrounds, as well as socio-economical ones, parents' lack of literacy, accessibility of literacy or nonexistence of it, etc. are present, so attitudes towards reading surely will vary because of the stated factors and probably more (Ridgway, 2003, p. 126).

On the other hand, "socio-cultural elements such as styles and attitudes may have a part to play in preempting the engagement of the cognitive ones" when it comes to literacy (Ridgway, 2003, p. 126). That is why having a clearly linguistic perception of it becomes fundamental. The results of the current educational model prove so. What is left then for foreign language teachers who want to promote literacy processes in the classroom? To go to the usual methodologies which are not really working or do something about it?

Rather than using theoretical models taken from international language literacies, it is argued that literate activities should be carried out in a pragmatic, contextualized and student-centered manner. Because only by regarding students' background, likes, social issues, perceptions of the language, them as people, literacy would be meaningful.

Appropriation of a foreign language is quite "important to professional success, personal development, and academic studies in many parts of the world" (Shin, 2013, p. 159). It has been considered an important language feature when it comes to EFL, to such an extent that it determines students' academic success. In that sense, motivation becomes an important factor that aims at improving their performance regarding reading and as well as their skills gradually because of the learner's cognitive effort when "understanding texts and decoding unfamiliar words" (Logan, Medford, & Hughes, 2011, p. 124).

On the other hand, lack of motivation might trigger problems in classrooms that teachers generally face (Huang, Ruan, & Capps, 2012, p. 55). This leads to highlighting the role of teachers to cooperate with students' learning process, that is, helping the child to be more interested in reading a second or foreign language. Furthermore, some studies have been carried out to demonstrate the positive, cognitive, social, and psychological development when positive learning motivation is evident, but such studies have also shown that motivation can decline as students "progress through

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

35

higher grades" (Lau & Nie, 2009, p.3). For this reason, it is necessary to have a deeper look at motivation in order to deal with a lack of it by distinguishing between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. By considering such differences, it can be said that intrinsic motivation has to do with the individual willingness to carry out a learning process, because of curiosity matters that come from students' inside. Lungu (2019) states that "Intrinsic motivation represents joy and satisfaction learners get from the learning process, exploration, and understanding something new" (p.141). Thus, the student chooses to learn despite the challenges that may arise, since, from a subjective perspective, each competition is a race to reach the goal. In other words, without effort, it is not possible to reach the expected result and, therefore, students must be encouraged to achieve the goal of learning the language in a friendly and fun way. This is because teachers should "create a healthy class environment so that students are intrinsically motivated and self-determined" (Santrock, 2009, as cited in Aguilar & Ye, 2017, p. 254).

Likewise, several specialists are responsible for giving comforting guidelines to instructors so that students are intrinsically encouraged, but when it comes to extrinsic motivation, the hope of students is based on external elements and not by the effect of satisfaction when executing the task. In the case of second language learning, Noels, Clement, and Pelletier (2001) precisely mention that in extrinsic motivation, learners are encouraged to learn due to external influences and social rewards, so their expectations lie on the external factors and not on the sense of pleasure when performing a task even though psychologists tend to ignore the incentives that influence extrinsic motivation such as "rewards and punishments as positive approach to student learning" (Santrock, 2009, as cited in Aguilar & Ye, 2017, p. 254).

According to Wigfield and Guthrie's motivation model, reading motivation is influenced by the individual reflections of students regarding their performance, their own objectives for doing learning activities and the influence of the environment around them. With regards to second language reading motivation, some scholars have explained reading motivation using a translated version of the MRQ (Motivation for Reading Questionnaire), such as Mori (2002), in a study where she identified several sub-components of reading motivation, apart from extrinsic and intrinsic motivation, which shows that there should be revised in terms of the research context. In a study replicating Mori's research, Nishino (2005) showed that reading motivation in another language is defined by multifaceted characteristics such as intrinsic and extrinsic

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

36

motivation, highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivation to "enlarge the quantity and breadth of reading in an ESL/EFL setting" (p. 39).

It has been established that students can engage in academic activities when they find the outcome interesting, useful, important, and easy to carry out; hence, motivation is triggered and attached to emotions regarding studying and school (Parhiala, Torppa, Vasalampi, Eklund, Poikkeus, & Aro, 2018, p. 197). Thus, it can be said that reading motivation is possible if students are engaged in meaningful tasks, since enjoyment at school leads to higher academic achievement, but it is necessary a certain degree of achievement in order to enjoy one's learning process as well as control and value cognitions, which, in turn, are related to cognitive approaches to emotions because of "the mediating role of cognitions" to explain the correspondence "between achievement and enjoyment" (Hagenauer & Harscher, 2014, p. 20).

Hence, it can be claimed that a learner's environment or context plays a crucial role in the process of developing reading motivation, but there are some factors, which are also necessary to consider among which personality characteristics may be highlighted. Previous researches have evinced that "personality is a strong predictor of children's reading motivation" in which experiences and traits also play an important role, meaning, the level of reading and reading self-concept that learners have; that is, intrinsic reading motivation is the result of children's personality, experiences, and attitudes toward reading, which may result resistant to change (Medford & McGeown, 2012, p. 790-791).

Beyond personality and its influence on reading motivation (either intrinsic or extrinsic), demographic variables, such as age, sex, and socioeconomic strata, have also been suggested as predictors of motivation, but they do not actually have a strong impact on learners' attitudes toward reading as self-efficacy and conscientiousness do (McGeown, et al., 2014, p. 284).

This is important to highlight as learners' social context does not determine the degree of reading motivation. The lack of it in the classroom is an issue that emerges from the academic context itself, but the social context can certainly be used to promote EFL reading by means of strategies implemented by the teacher like storytelling, which can be helpful to understand one's and other's culture, and to discern the world around us (Rahimi & Samaneh, 2017, p. 2).

After all, there has been consensus regarding the importance of language learning in the current globalized world; therefore, language learning must go beyond grammar rules and learners need to be enough equipped in order to communicate effectively,

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

37

that is, to consider the "intercultural dimension of language learning" (Morgan, et al., 2018, p. 10).

Given the previous literature, it is necessary to consider learning cannot occur without social interaction (Gholami, Rahman, & Mustapha, 2012, p. 2). Social issues permeate students' processes directly as well as school settings which are designed to provide real life situations. In that sense, "social context is crucial in the development of attitudes towards the target language, its speakers, and the language learning situation", as a result, motivation is enhanced" (p. 2). Learning opportunities also depend on the social configuration surrounding learners and their institutions. According to the previous statement, students are conceived as social beings who take part in social scenarios, therefore, social contexts and their relationship to students take precedence in this study, since it is in this social environment that student's language is happening (Gholami, Zainab, & Mustapha, 2012, p. 2).

Finally, second and / or foreign language learning takes place in social environments, which can be evidenced in the attitudes and feelings generated by the context in learners towards the language they are developing and the possibilities their communities provide for such learning (Gholami, Rahman, & Mustapha, 2012, p. 2).

Methodology

In order to comprehend complex realities, flexible methods are needed which suit those complexities, and to provide consequently, different perspectives or understandings of a single phenomenon. That is why this research has aimed to be a qualitative one. As stated in Savin-Baden and Howell (2013), "qualitative researches look for deep meaning about local settings in context and at a particular time" (p. 3). Following the above, a qualitative focus has matched that horizon and also, with the challenging students' situation to be addressed.

There has been growing acceptance regarding the acceptance of action research as part of the methodology of the research process in the field of education. Furthermore, this method allows researchers to create specific changes in the context in which the research is being carried out. Thus, when it comes to action research in educational settings, teachers are involved in the process "of creating educational change" as well as aiming at the development of "increased knowledge and understanding of their own

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

38

practice" by means of constant reflection (Elliot, 2011, as cited in Gallagher-Bett, 2019, p. 30).

Only by considering this fact and the scope of our research project, it is intended to increase the levels of reading motivation in fifth grade students from the selected public school by using the social issues that surrounded the students' immediate context, such as drug addiction, gambling, gun control, violence, criminal gangs, and murders. However, it was firstly necessary to diagnose key factors that influence students' level of motivation, such as attitudes towards reading in English as a foreign language, as well as their current level of competence at the time this study was carried out, which must have suited the material to be used and the actions to be considered during the research project.

The most appropriate manner that fitted better the stated path of the research project was participant observation, journals and semi-structured interviews as data collection tools. It is only by going deep down students' insights and taking into consideration their attitudes towards reading in a foreign language that a possible relation between the factors mentioned above might be perceptible.

Didactic and contextualized reading material was used. These were short stories based on students' interests and of course, on their particular context so that the material fitted rightly to the fifth graders' level and likes by taking as guideline their reactions and comments about them, as reading preferences influence the selection of the material to be used (Aydin & Bağcı, 2018, p. 129).

This interest from students is understood in terms of sociology, which, along with correspondence between the content of children's book and the learners' level, language, and printing are considered four important elements when it comes to book selection as reading material that can influence positively (Aydin & Bağcı, 2018, p. 129).

The method of observation plays a fundamental role in society, since it allows researchers to analyze the object of study by means of their objective perceptions. On the other hand, to make social observation three types of observations must be considered: Participant observation, which allows the observer to perform a submersion in front of the specific objective. At this stage of observation, it is allowed to take a deeper approach as a certain period. There is also a non-participating observation method, which refers to an observer without seeing a relationship compared to what has been observed. Its observation function is without any interaction with the social context. Finally, observation is presented as direct and indirect. Direct observation refers to observation of the exact moment, that is, that the observer is looking at and analyzing the social context at the

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

39

moment. On the other hand, indirect observation refers to the subject's observation in the face of his study of interest through observations made by others, being recordings, documents, etc. (Ciesielska, Boström, & Öhlander, 2018, p. 34).

Regarding the type of observations presented, the best observation tool for this research project was participatory, since the research was intended to be carried out in an elementary school for which was crucial a relationship in terms of face-to-face interaction because it allowed a relationship with students. On the other hand, this participatory observation provides interviews and analysis' deeper understanding.

Regarding interviews as a data collection tool, it could be said that they allow us to collect information by means of their "friendly" nature due to the regularity of talking in everyday life with ease. By interviewing, it is even possible to support data that has been previously obtained through other data collection tools during the research project and thus, different data can be contrasted and compared to explain given interpretations when analyzing it (Griffee, 2012, p. 160). This is, interviews help to enrich the results of the research project when thoughts and ideas are conveyed and expressed in the form of words by the interview; thoughts and ideas that will later be coded by raters in order to establish the degree of reliability of the obtained data, that is to say, its consistency and replication in different contexts over time (Griffee, 2012, p. 166).

Besides, interviews are well known because of their flexibility due to the different manners in which it is possible to carry them out. That is why, many types of interviews can be distinguished and, among which, semi structured written interviews were chosen to conduct the present research. This type of interview combines both open and close questions and even though there is an established topic to be discussed, respondents do not have to stick to it and their position regarding the topic may be favorable or not (Batista, Matos, & Nascimento, 2017).

Finally, journals were also considered as a data collection tool for this study, as they also provide useful information and data that were analyzed to find specific results. Journals are commonly used in qualitative research to support "written dialogue between students and teachers, to assist self-assessment by teachers in training, and enable individual researchers to investigate their own learning processes" (Griffee, 2012, p. 199). Given this, the last purpose is precisely the one for which journals were selected as part of the data collection tools for the research. They contribute to develop a deep reflection on the data that is being obtained from the research by means of

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

40

other data collection tools and thus, it becomes an important insight when analyzing final data.

The initial categories were chosen to analyze the motivation of reading in the fifth graders as a strategic model in a social context that is reflected in the public school located in Bello. Short stories were created based on the interests that the students chose during the interviews (questionnaire) that were given to each of them. They were supposed to write about their reading preferences, what they currently read in the English class, and the social issues they perceived around their school and community. Besides, a series of social problems were chosen based on the local news and official statement by the local police so that they could identify them in their neighborhood or school, such as drug addiction, gambling, gun control, violence, criminal gangs, and murders. For the creation of the short stories, an analysis was made selecting the four most mentioned genres along with the most repetitive social problems; the four short stories were created using science fiction, terror, drugs, and action plots. However, it must be highlighted that the social problems were addressed implicitly through the already mentioned genres.

On the other hand, observation through internal and external participation were applied, that is to say, expressions of like or dislike, and perceptions of understanding, possible predictions, among other aspects were observed when they were reading. In addition, there was a 2-hour exercise to clarify doubts as a moment of participatory interaction to guarantee that everyone understood in a formal way.

It is worth mentioning that social context is an important factor to be considered in language learning. Students acquire a foreign language to use in social interaction with learning peers. However, the context in which the social interaction takes place may be surrounded by certain social issues that affect language learning. This situation was specifically evident in the analyzed context of the present study; students live in a social critical setting, since data collection tools showed that several social issues were happening there, which directly affects their learning.

In order to make collected data of the present study valid and reliable, three types of triangulation methods have been carried out during the stated research process.

Given the definition of triangulation as the use of multiple methods or data sources with aims to comprehend and understand phenomena deeper (Patton, as cited in Cope, Bryant-Lukosius, Alba, Blythe, & Neville, 2014, p. 1), data, investigator, and

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

41

theory triangulations were applied as strategy to "test validity and reliability through the convergence of information from different sources" (Cope et al., 2014, p. 1).

Firstly, data triangulation refers to the collection of data using "multiple sources" so that the gathered information does not come from a unique data collection tool or source, increasing the validation and gaining multiple perspectives of data (Hastings, 2012, p. 3 In regards to the present research, it is claimed that data triangulation lays on this research since it was obtained from written semi-structured interviews, participant observations and journals.

Second, "investigator triangulation involves several evaluators to engage in observations or analyze participant responses. Using multiple investigators allows for the auditing of data consistency and reduces the potential bias" (Hastings, 2012, p. 3). In this sense, this type of triangulation might offer "both confirmation of findings and different perspectives, adding breadth to the phenomenon of interest". Since this study was taken apart by four investigators who brought their ideas, conceptions, analysis, rigor, hearts and so many other facts to the research, it is definitely permeated by this type of triangulation.

Finally, theory triangulation regards implementing different theories to analyze and interpret data, as well as giving theoretical basis while conducting the research process (Hastings, 2012, p. 3) A variety of theoretical perspectives or already stated hypotheses might "assist the researchers in supporting or refuting findings" (Cope et al., 2014, p. 545). Taking in mind the multidisciplinary theoretical framework and literature review this study has implemented to give birth and basis to the already mentioned research path, theory triangulation is evident throughout this study.

Results

This research was intended to relate the breach that has been found between students' social issues and their level of reading motivation in English, as it is not only intended to increase the levels of reading motivation in English by linking it to students' social issues but also to raise awareness among the academic community and specially, among fifth grade students selected as the participants for this study, about being critical towards their context. Regarding the research question, it was actually evinced the relation between students' social issues and their level of reading motivation, since the stories they were exposed to, demonstrated that their levels of motivation were indeed enhanced and their critical perception in regards to their context was also raised.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

42

Some participants claimed that one of the stories they read "tenía partes charras" (S1[8], Intervention, R4[9]), "las imágenes me gustaron" (S1, Intervention, R2), and "que habla sobre la casa de mi tía" (S2, Intervention, R1). Raising levels of awareness were also noticed in answers, such as "la comunicación es importante" (S1, Intervention, R3), and "que pelear nos da problemas" (S2, Intervention, R4).

Regarding the first category, reading motivation, it was found that a large number of students are motivated when they read genres such as action, terror, comedy, and adventure in everyday life as well as comics and tales. On the other hand, it was found within the initial category other relevant data that emerged during the interview and occurred in selecting the genre that they would like to read the most in the English class. That is why the following genres were found as evidence: terror, which was the first one mentioned the most, followed by action, comedy, and science fiction (S5, Interviews, R4), (S11, Interviews, R4). In this category "reading motivation", by means of the intervention, students expressed their interest toward the stories, especially importance was evident respecting the images they had, since they helped to increase the level of motivation in reading. Participants said that they enjoyed the stories because of "dibujos y el tema" (S3, Intervention, R2) and "imágenes" (S1, Intervention, R4). Besides, the connection they developed in some sections of the stories was considered, because they found them "charras" (S1, Intervention, R1).

As one of the intentions of the study was to link reading motivation to social issues, which, in turn, are part of students' social context, this one was determined as another initial category mentioned from the beginning of the research process. Essentially, several recurring social problems were identified by means of the data collection tools implementation. In the case of the semi-structured interviews, only one participant claimed that "vivo en un condominio, eso no me aplica" (S14, Journal, R1). The rest of the participants indeed recognized at least one of them. In an ascending order, the most common social problems were: first, criminal gangs, second, gun control, third, violence and fourth, murders (S22, Interview, R3). These social problems were implicitly included in the plots of the stories the participants read. Thus, it was evidenced that students were able to identify them during the intervention and their critical perception towards their social context was raised in terms of what they learned from the situations presented in the stories. Besides, they associated those situations with their real contexts in such a way that they expressed what they thought about the social issues they had previously identified while reading. Mainly, the participants

---

8   S stands for Student
9   R stands for Researcher

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.
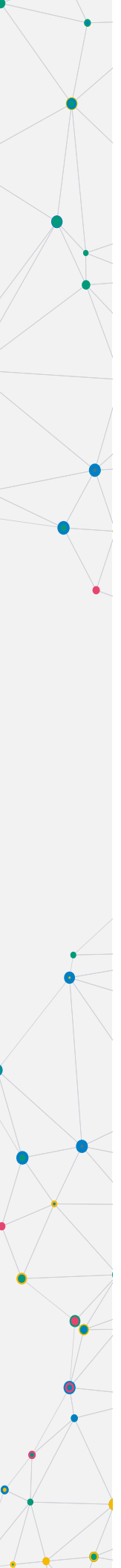
43

expressed their impressions regarding the negative consequences that can derive from the aforementioned social issues, such as: "Que pelear nos da problemas" (S2, Intervention, R3) and "que no me gusta la violencia, es malo pelear" (S3, Intervention, R1).

Finally, when it comes to literacy as the third initial category, it was possible to find certain reiterative aspects that evidenced a "visible development" and "lacking" of English literacy at the same time, during the English class. These visible development aspects were basically displayed on classes focused on the structural part of the language to develop literacy. In other words, students claimed their classes were mainly focused on learning to count numbers, to learn songs and grammatical aspects of the language; aspects that are supposed to develop English literacy. The information is supported on the second question of the interview questionnaire that asked about what they read during the English class, but instead of giving them a set of options to select from, this particular question was open. On the contrary, the lacking of literacy appropriation was also evident when students were exposed to the stories specifically designed for them, the stories had an implicit relation between students' social issues and their respective likes found through the data collection tools, that is to say, students were having constraints when reading the stories, since their reading level was not adequate to the stories'. Such information might be perceivable after the stories' intervention in comments such as: "No fue fácil de leer" (S1, Intervention, R4), "entendí más o menos, algunas palabras no las entendí" (S2, Intervention, R1) and "como no sé inglés, y mi mamá tampoco, fue un poco difícil" (S3, Intervention, R2).

These given results by means of the data collection tools and the intervention, as previously presented, were pertinent and helpful when trying to answer the research question set at the beginning of the project. This gave an important insight regarding the initial categories. Firstly, students' personal likes and what they found interesting when reading a text were aspects identified within reading motivation. Afterwards, students thought of certain social issues that surround their immediate context, which later was identified in the stories they read. Last, but not least, students read about many subjects that intend to develop literacy and, on the contrary, they do not have the enough literacy skills they are supposed to have at that level.

Discussion

It is firstly deduced that there was a lack of connection between students' social issues and the intended literacy skills the English teacher was trying to enhance. This was evident in the answers of the semi-structured interviews applied and the intervention

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

44

that was implemented in the fifth-grade students from the Bello public school, as they claimed they are supposed to read what is assigned by their English teacher during class. In this sense, the input students receive from their daily English classes (that intends to promote literacy) has no relation at all with their reading likes they expressed on the semi-structured interviews, which confirmed the initial deduction of the study before data collection tools were applied. Also, the already mentioned input students often received, seemed not to promote literacy appropriation in them, since they were not fully capable of reading the stories that they were exposed to because of lacking proficiency and literacy skills.

Regarding theory triangulation, there is a strong theoretical basis to support one the core points of the study, that is, motivation. It was previously mentioned how motivation happens when students' learning is attached to their contexts and, in this particular case, the participants could identify their contexts' social issues present in the stories to be read. Thus, if motivation when learning in a foreign language is present, it is possible to achieve success in it. This implies to recognize the importance of considering students' social context in learning and specifically, in language learning through reading.

The context in which social interaction prevails is destined towards intercultural communication in the classroom based on the sociocultural approach, that is, students see other horizons without forgetting their own reality (Kinginger, Thorne, 2012, as cited in Gholami et al., 2012, p. 73). For example, in the results section, it was confirmed that the students were able to identify social problems within their community and school. As well as the critical perception of their social context increased in terms of what they learned from the relevant drawbacks that were illustrated in the short stories. These facts occurred during the stories' intervention. Besides, some statements that confirmed these claims were: "La comunicación es importante" (S1, Intervention, R4) and "que no me gusta la violencia, es malo pelear" (S3, Intervention, R2).

Students tend to engage in classroom activities when they find them useful and easy to follow through (Parhiala et al, 2018, p. 196) the previous statement has taken place when implementing the stories intervention, students' English proficiency level was not in equilibrium with the series of stories designed for an English level they were supposed to be in. As consequence, perceptions of difficulty or complexity when reading the stories were assumed by students because they were not "easy to follow through", comments such: "No fue fácil de leer" (S1, Intervention, R1) and "algunas palabras no las entendí" (S2, Intervention, R2) demonstrated that. Attitudes towards reading surely will vary because of several factors such as: "the development of its

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

45

own culture and idiosyncratic features (e.g., orthography, discourse structure)", certain socioeconomically-defined backgrounds, availability of resources for enhancing literacy and absence of parent's literacy play a relevant role to be considered when implementing literacy procedures in the classroom as well as assuming students' current proficiency level (Ridgway, Literacy and foreign language reading, 2003, p. 126). Statements such: "Como no sé inglés, y mi mamá tampoco, fue un poco difícil" (S3, Intervention, R3) supported these claims.

Even though the first data collection tools were applied in a face-to-face setting, the stories intervention was carried out in a virtual type due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic that made schools close their physical facilities. Besides, it was difficult to maintain a stable communication channel with students due to their technological devices and internet absence which provoked setbacks when communicating with them. Another issue that caused conflict when implementing the present study, was the accessibility to the school facility, since it was a risky setting to approach due to the social issues that were/are happening around the Bello public school.

It was concluded that students were not fully capable of using proper literacy skills since they did not reach the literacy skills, they needed for understanding and comprehending the stories' intervention even though they were specifically designed based on their proficiency level in the language. So, this implies that there is no relation amid what students are taught and what they are currently supposed to know. Else ways, motivation needs to be considered as an indispensable matter to increase the level of reading when this is included as part of the English class, but literacy needs to be developed before in a way that students feel relate and according to their level, that is to say, to contextualize contents and not to overlook them. In this sense, the more proficient students are and the more contextualized the contents are, the higher levels of motivation when reading. Going hand in hand with the previous point, during the intervention it was seen that reading went better by using images to interpret the textual part. In this sense, students feel more motivated to read when they come across texts that include images, as they can interpret and associate what they read with illustrations even if they are not proficient in a foreign language. This could be a good way to develop vocabulary and literacy instead of teaching isolated subjects as it was evinced during the semi-structured interviews. This explains why students had difficulties understanding the text of the stories, so they found support by means of the illustrations that were included along the stories.

Furthermore, there is a lack of connection between students' interests and what is addressed in the English class. Literacy processes and learning in general could

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

46

be enhanced if a student-centered perspective is taken by the teacher, in order to make the reading and class experiences more authentic and relatable. The students' response to the intervention proposed is stating that English literacy can actually be approached taking in mind students' interests and likes, as well as putting implicitly content based on their realities to be critical about it. These strategies could be an alternative to the old fashion abstract methodology of teaching literacy in the English class. These results suggest English teachers that the current-old-fashion perspectives of teaching literacy are not quite working the way they are supposed to. In this sense, this requires that English classes should be shifting their already existing line of sight, because clearly, they are not working. This demands more from teachers, it requires that classes are planned and designed according to the students' context, interests and likes, and learning styles.

By considering the nature of this project, it can be said that its replication could be extended to schools located in neighborhoods with similar contexts to the one in which the research was carried in order to create social changes and impact. However, this implies the project is limited at a certain extent when it comes to schools that do not precisely have social issues surrounding it. In this case, the most suitable path to be stated is to implement reading in a foreign language by focusing on the same scope, that is, social issues to raise motivation even if students are not immersed in them. The final purpose in such a case would be similar, as students would be empowered to be critical in regard to their context. Given the scope of the research presented, the number of findings or results obtained from it might be limited per se, since the target to be analyzed was only one grade.

This study could bring basis to future upcoming research projects with possible relatable aims to this one, that is to say: literacy and motivation in a foreign language focused, as well as the one which are pretending to take in mind social features that are implicit not only in language learning, but in all teaching-learning processes in general. Besides, as it was mentioned in the previous paragraph, other grades could be considered to obtain possible new information and findings regarding motivation and reading processes at different ages.
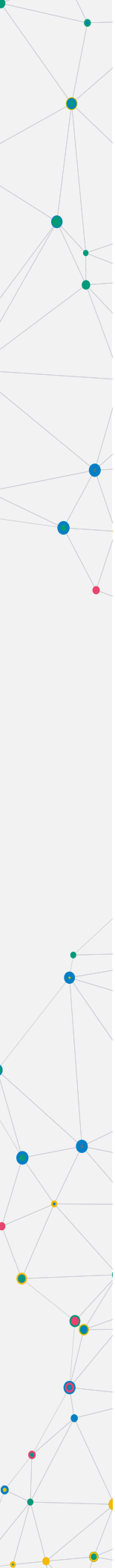
References

Aguilar, E., & Ye, Y. (2017). A Comparative Study of Grades 7, 8 and 9 Students' Motivation for Learning English as a Foreign Language in the Regular Program and English Program at Tepleela School, Bangkok, Thailand. *Assumption University Journals*, 251-262.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

47

Aydin, G., & Bağcı, B. (2018). Reading Preferences of Middle School Students. *World Journal of Education, 8*(2), 127-139.

Batista, C. E., Matos, L. A., & Nascimento, A. B. (2017). A Entrevista como Técnica de Investigação na Pesquisa Qualitativa. *Revista Interdisciplinae Científica Aplicada, 11*(3), 23-38.

Butt, M., Khan, H. K., & Wilayat, B. (2012). Teaching Context and Students' Learning: A Case Study of a Public Sector University. *Global Social Science Review, 4*(4), 83-92.

Ciesielska, M., Boström, K. W., & Öhlander, M. (2018). Qualitative Methodologies in Organization Studies. In M. Ciesielska, K. W. Boström, & M. Öhlander, *Observation Methods* (pp. 33-52). Stockholm: The Author(s).

Cope, D. G., Bryant-Lukosius, D., Alba, D., Blythe, J., & Neville, A. J. (2014, Septiembre). The Use of Triangulation in Qualitative Research. *Oncology Nursing Forum, 41*(5), 545-547.

Dornvei, Z. (2001). Motivational Strategies in the Language Classroom. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CB09780511667343.

Escobar Fandiño, F. G., Muñoz, L. D., & Silva Velandia, A. J. (2019). Motivation and E-Learning English as a foreign language: A qualitative study. *Heliyon, 5*(9), 1-7. doi:10.1016/j.heliyon.2019.e02394

Gallagher-Bett, A. (2019). Supporting and empowering language teachers through action research communities. *British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data*, 29-36.

Gardner, R. (2007). Motivation and Second Language Acquisition. *Porta Linguarum*, 9-20.

Griffee, D. (2012). *An Introduction to Second Language Research Methods Design and Data*. United States of America: eBook Edition.

Gholami, R., Rahman, S. Z., & Mustapha, G. (2012). Social Context as an Indirect Trigger in EFL Contexts: Issues and Solutions. *English Language Teaching, 5*(3), 73. doi:10.5539/elt.v5n3p73.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

48

Hagenauer, G., & Harscher, T. (2014). Early Adolescents-Enjoyment Experienced in Learning Situations at School and Its Relation to Student Achievement. *Journal of Education and Training Studies,2*(2), 20-30.

Hastings, S. L. (2012). Encyclopedia of Research Design. In S. L. Hastings, & N. j. Salkind (Ed.), *Triangulation* (pp. 1-6). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Huang, S., Ruan, J., & Capps, M. (2012). What Chinese Cultural Values and Instructional Practices Influences Chinese Middle School Students' Reading Motivation in Taiwan. *Quarterly Journal Of Chinese Studies*, 55-76.

Icfes. (2016). *Informe nacional de resultados Saber Pro 2012-2015.* Retrieved from Instituto Colombiano para la Evaluación de la Educación: http://www.icfes.gov.co/documents/20143/238004/Informe%20nacional%0de%20resultados%20saber%20pro%202112%20-%202015.pdf.

Jacknick, C.M. (2008). Using Situated Learning to Examine the Language of Teaching and Learning. Teachers College, Columbia University, Working Paper in TESOL & Applied Linguistic, 2008, Vol. 8, Nº 1. (Online) Available: http://journals.tclibrary.org/templates/about/editable/pdf/Jacknick%20Forum.pdf

Kazantseva, E., Valiakhmetova, E., Minisheva, L., Anokhina, S., & Latypova, E. (2016). A Survey-Based Study of Motivation and Attitude to Learning a Second Language at Ufa State University of Economics and Service. *Global Media Journal*, 1-9.

Kinginger, C., & Thorne, S. (2012). Social Context as an Indirect Trigger in EFL Contexts: Issues and. *English Language Teaching, 5*(3), 1-10. doi:10.5539/elt.v5n3p73

Kramsch, C., & Nolden, T. (1994). Redefining Literacy in a Foreign Language. *Spring*, 28-25.

Lau, S., & Nie, Y. (2009). Complementary roles of care and behavioral control in classroom management: The self-determination theory perspective. *Contemporary Educational Psychology* , 185-194.

Logan, S., Medford, E., & Hughes, N. (2011). The importance of intrinsic motivation for high and low ability readers' reading comprehension performance. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 124-128.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

49

Lungu, M. (2019). Motivation as Part of the Educational Process. *Journal Plus Education, 22*(1), 141-149.

McGeown, S., Putwain, D., Geijer, E., Boffey, E., Markham, J., & Vince, A. (2014). Predictors of adolescents' academic motivation: Personality, self-efficacy and adolescents' characteristics. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 278-286.

Medford, E., & McGeown, S. (2012). The influence of personality characteristics on children's intrinsic reading motivation. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 786-791.

Morgan, A., Spada, N., Orton, J., Tadesco, L., East, M., Scrimgeour, A., & Hajek, J. (2018). 21 Keys Ideas for Languages Learning in the 21st Century. *Babel, 52*(2/3), 1-15.

Ministerio de Educación Nacional. (2006). *Serie Guías 22. Estándares básicos de competencias en lenguas extranjeras: inglés. Formar en lenguas extranjeras: iel reto! Lo que necesitamos saber y saber hacer. Bogotá: Imprenta Nacional.*

Mondada, L. & Pekarek, S. (2004). Second Language Acquisition as Situated Practice: Task Accomplishment in the French Second Language Classroom. The Modern Language Journal, 88, iv, DOI: 0026-7902

Mori, S. (2002). Redefining Motivation to Read in a Foreign Language. *Reading in a Foreign Language: A refereed international online journal of issues in foreign language reading and literacy*, 91-110.

Nishino, T. (2005). Japanese high school students' L2 reading motivation. *Japan University Editorial*, 32-41.

Noels, K., Clement, R., & Pelletier, L. (2001). Intrinsic, Extrinsic, and Integrative Orientations of French Canadian Learners of English. *The Canadian Modern Language Review, 57*(3), 424-442.

Parhiala, P., Torppa, M., Vasalampi, K., Eklund, K., Poikkeus, A., & Aro, T. (2017). Profiles of school motivation and emotional well-being among adolescents: Associations with math and reading performance. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 196-204.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

50

Rahimi, M., & Samaneh, Y. (2017). Effects of offline vs. online digital storytelling on the development of EFL learners' literacy skills. *Cogent Education*, 1-13.

Ridgway, T. (2003). Literacy and foreign language reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 2*(15), 117-129.

Santrock, J. (2009). (4th ed.) Educational Psychology. New York, NY: Mc-Graw Hill.

Savin-Baden, M., & Howell, C. (2013). *Qualitative Research: The essential guide to theory and practice.* New York: Routledge.

Shin, K.-C. (2013). Developmental Approaches to the Teaching of EFL Reading. *Pan-Pacific Association of Applied Linguistics*, 159-170.

Vibulphol, J. (2016). Students' Motivation and Learning and Teachers' Motivational Strategies in English Classrooms in Thailand. *English Language Teaching, 9*(4), 64-75. doi:10.5539/elt.v9n4p64

Wigfield, A., & Guthrie, J. T. (1997). Relations of Children's Motivation for Reading to the Amount and Breadth for Their Reading. *Journal of Education Psychology, 89*(3), 420-432.

Shimmering Words: Research and Pedagogy E-Journal. ISSN (versión en línea) 2463-0403. Enero – Diciembre / 2021. Volumen 11.

51